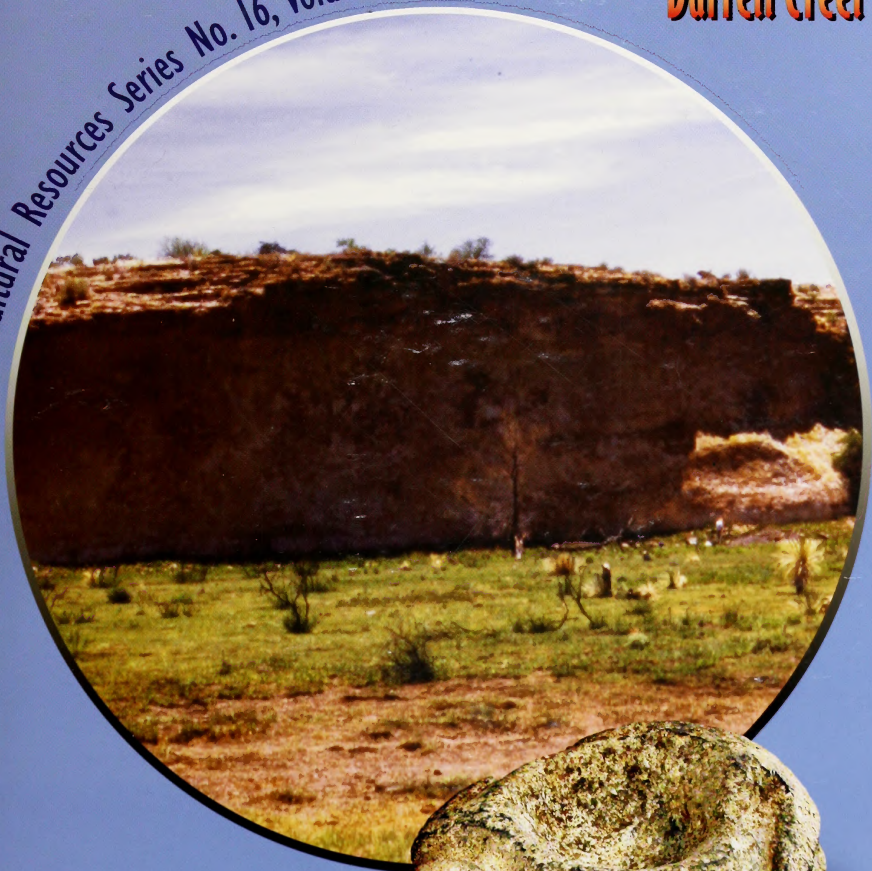


# Excavations at the Old Town Ruin Luna County, New Mexico, 1989–2003

Cultural Resources Series No. 16, Volume 1, 2006

Darrell Creel



New Mexico Bureau of Land Management

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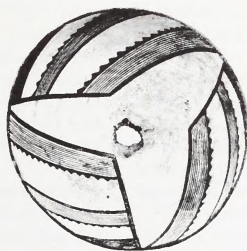
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# Excavations at the Old Town Ruin Luna County, New Mexico, 1989–2003

Darrell Creel



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## SERIES EDITOR'S FOREWORD

*Excavations at the Old Town Ruin, Luna County, New Mexico, 1989–2003* represents the successful culmination of a two-decade partnership between the New Mexico Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Texas A&M University, and the University of Texas at Austin. Originally, archeological testing and excavations at this Mimbres site began with the supposition that it would confirm near complete loss of integrity to this vandalized property, thus clearing the way for a land exchange and eventual disposal of the property out of federal ownership.

Eleven summers of field school research under the careful supervision of Dr. Darrell Creel revealed that Old Town still contains much valuable data. The research program at this site contributed significantly to the advancement of Mimbres archaeology in particular and to southwestern archaeology in general. Numerous presentations of papers at professional conferences by Dr. Creel and his students, many master's theses, and several doctoral dissertations resulted from this first systematic scientific investigation of Old Town. Needless to say, the BLM is no longer considering disposing of the property.

This publication represents what we hope will be the first of a two-volume set on Old Town. The present publication reveals new information on construction details and retirement procedures of great kivas and small kivas, the identification of architectural details associated with the terminal Classic period, the association of prehistoric roads with Old Town, and the later Black Mountain phase architecture at the site. A second volume will present the technical analyses of faunal remains and chemical composition studies of ceramic, obsidian, and turquoise artifacts.

Dr. Darrell Creel deserves enormous credit for his patience and perseverance. He is a meticulous scholar and this volume is a testament to what can be gleaned from highly disturbed archeological sites. Also, the Las Cruces District Office of the BLM supported this project over many years and over many changes in administration. The BLM is indebted to former BLM Mimbres Resource Area archeologist Michael Mallouf, who initiated this partnership with Dr. Creel and who helped resurrect the BLM's commitment to the sponsorship of university field schools throughout New Mexico.

On a personal note, this publication will be my last as the *New Mexico Cultural Resources Publication Series* editor. Retirement beckons. We began this venture in 1987 and have now published 16 volumes. The series has been favorably reviewed in such professional journals as *American Antiquity* and was awarded the 2005 New Mexico Heritage Preservation Award for "Excellence in Heritage Publications." It represents the ongoing commitment of the BLM to publish research results from contracts, permittee research, and university field schools sponsored by the BLM in a timely manner.

The New Mexico BLM will continue to issue new volumes in our publication series. Hundreds of copies of each new issue are distributed free of charge to research institutions, nonprofit organizations, libraries, and universities. However, alternative distribution means, including internet distribution and other electronic media will be explored. That will be up to the next State Archeologist to decide.

—Stephen L. Fosberg, *Series Editor*, August 2006





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# Introduction

As one of the largest and most easily accessed Pueblos along the lower Mimbres River, the Old Town ruin has long been known to archaeologists and pothunters alike (Figure 1). Those familiar with regional archaeology recognized early on that Old Town was a major prehistoric community—much like the better known, professionally excavated Mat-tocks, Swarts, Galaz, and Cameron Creek sites higher in the Mimbres River drainage—but no systematic work was done at Old Town until 1989. Until very recently, in fact, most of what we know about Mimbres archaeology derives from excavations in upper and middle valley sites, whereas Old Town is located in the hotter and drier lower valley. A contribution based on a lower valley site is, to say the least, long overdue. Research at Old Town in fact suggests that it was one of two preeminent communities along the Mimbres River until about A.D. 1200. Although modest in scale, the 1989–2003 excavations reported here have provided a number of new and important insights into regional prehistory and, for the first time, have yielded systematic data from a lower-elevation Mimbres site.

As noted above, Old Town may have been one of two preeminent communities along the Mimbres River; the other is the well-known Galaz site (Anyon and LeBlanc 1984). Each was located adjacent to an unusually large area of arable and hydrologically favorable floodplain; Galaz, in the upper Mimbres valley, and Old Town, in the lower valley just above the point where surface flow in the Mimbres River normally ends.

Perhaps because of its location in the hot desert grasslands in the lower Mimbres valley, but more likely because of its advanced state of destruction even in 1920, archaeologists have avoided working at the site, in effect ceding it to generations of pothunters. Long regarded as a classic example of an almost completely destroyed Mimbres pueblo, Old Town

was widely considered to lack significant scientific research potential. About the only good thing one can say about the concession of Old Town is that the site has not suffered the indignity of extensive bulldozing and near-total destruction by commercial pothunters like many another Mimbres pueblo.

However, in the late 1980s, when the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) was considering an exchange of the half-section of land on which Old Town sits, Las Cruces District archaeologist Michael Malouf wisely decided to verify this prevailing assumption. He elicited the help of Dr. Harry Shafer, who was then directing Texas A&M University's long-term excavations at the NAN Ranch Ruin in the middle Mimbres valley. They agreed that a portion of the 1989 Texas A&M University summer archaeological field school would be devoted to exploratory excavations at Old Town. Thus began more than a decade of research at this long-neglected Mimbres pueblo, which confirmed that Old Town holds important, well-preserved remains despite more than a century of looting.

## Site Description

Old Town is a large complex located on the east side of the Mimbres River valley, in the northern portion of the Deming Plain in northwestern Luna County, New Mexico. At an elevation of about 5,000 feet, the site is located in the Chihuahuan Desertscrub life zone, where the average annual precipitation is some 20 cm. In this section of the valley, the river has cut through a thick formation of volcanic tuff, and most of the site sits some 20 m above the valley floor on this tuff landform (Figures 2 and 3). All of the known architectural remnants are on this higher portion of the site, but there are significant archaeological remains in the valley below.

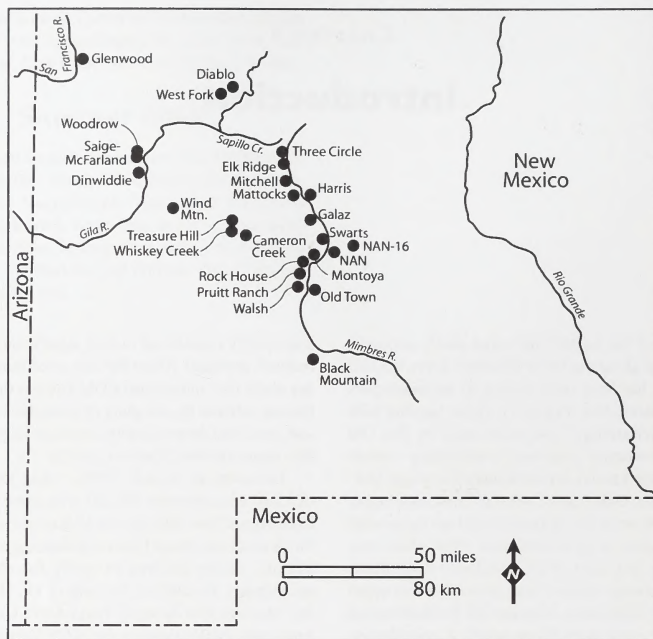


Figure 1. Map of southwest New Mexico showing location of Old Town and other sites mentioned in the text.

Old Town's prominent location allows clear visibility for long distances in most directions. Not far to the south, one can easily identify the point in the river where surface flow typically ceases except during high discharge periods after heavy rains. The last of the cottonwood trees growing along the river marks the area where surface flow goes underground.

The valley here is nearly a kilometer wide, and the river is lined with cottonwood and other trees (Figure 4). At least two older river channels are readily visible in the valley and retain standing water in some sections owing to the relatively high water table. This high water table coupled with the large extent of arable floodplain in part made this such an attractive location to the ancient Mimbrenos. As discussed in Creel (2006), this section of the valley likely had such a high water table most, if not all, of the time because of the unique hydrological features, particularly the geologic feature that serves as a dam

across the valley just to the south. One can thus liken the Mimbres valley to a reservoir filled with a porous gravel aquifer, and it is the lowest end nearest the dam that retains water even during prolonged dry periods. Paradoxical though it may seem, the Old Town section of the valley would have been one of the best locations for farming in a long drought, even though it is in the desert.

The countryside surrounding Old Town is today largely desert grassland with substantial growth of mesquite, creosote, yucca, and other woody plants. Historical documents clearly reveal that much of the area was mostly devoid of these woody plants until fairly recently. Indeed, aerial photographs dating from 1937 show that most of this upland woody vegetation began to grow in the Old Town locality in the 1950s (Figures 5 and 6). Prehistorically, there were probably few woody plants near Old Town with the exception of cottonwoods, willows, and other riparian species





Figure 2. Aerial photograph of Old Town from the north.



Figure 3. View of Old Town from the northwest in the Mimbres River valley floodplain.



Figure 4. View north up the Mimbres River valley from the cliff at Old Town.

growing along the river. Juniper grows sparsely today on the slopes of Taylor Mountain some 2 km north, and oaks are present slightly farther away on the hill and mountain slopes.

## **The 1989–2003 Excavations**

The objectives of the 1989–2003 excavations at Old Town were, first, to determine if any significant archaeological remains were still present after more than a century of pothunting and, second, to pursue various research topics identified during the course of the project. Needless to say, significant remains were found; and yet, after an additional 12 summer seasons of excavation, we still have only a very modest sampling and understanding of Old Town.

As noted previously, the first season of work at Old Town was conducted as part of the 1989 Texas A&M University summer archaeological field school, which had long worked at the NAN Ranch Ruin. The excavations at Old Town were directed by Darrell Creel. As the main work on the NAN project ended

that year, the investigations at Old Town were subsequently transferred to the University of Texas at Austin, where they remained under the direction of Darrell Creel, with continued support from the BLM Las Cruces District. Except during one season, the excavations were conducted by University of Texas summer field schools with the valuable assistance of several volunteers.

Given the large size of the Old Town complex, different concentrations of archaeological remains were assigned letter designations for convenience in recording. Areas A, B, and C comprise parts of the site where architectural remains are known to be present, and Area A is traditionally known as the Old Town site (Figure 7). Area D is in the valley below the cliff on the west side of Area A, and Area E is a small concentration of artifacts east of Area C.

Area A is best known for its Classic Mimbres pueblo, but it also has a substantial array of earlier pit houses and could contain Archaic period remains as well. Area B is just to the northeast of Area A and is known to have remains dating only to the Three Circle phase. Area C is south of Area A, and its most obvious remains are a Black Mountain phase pueblo.



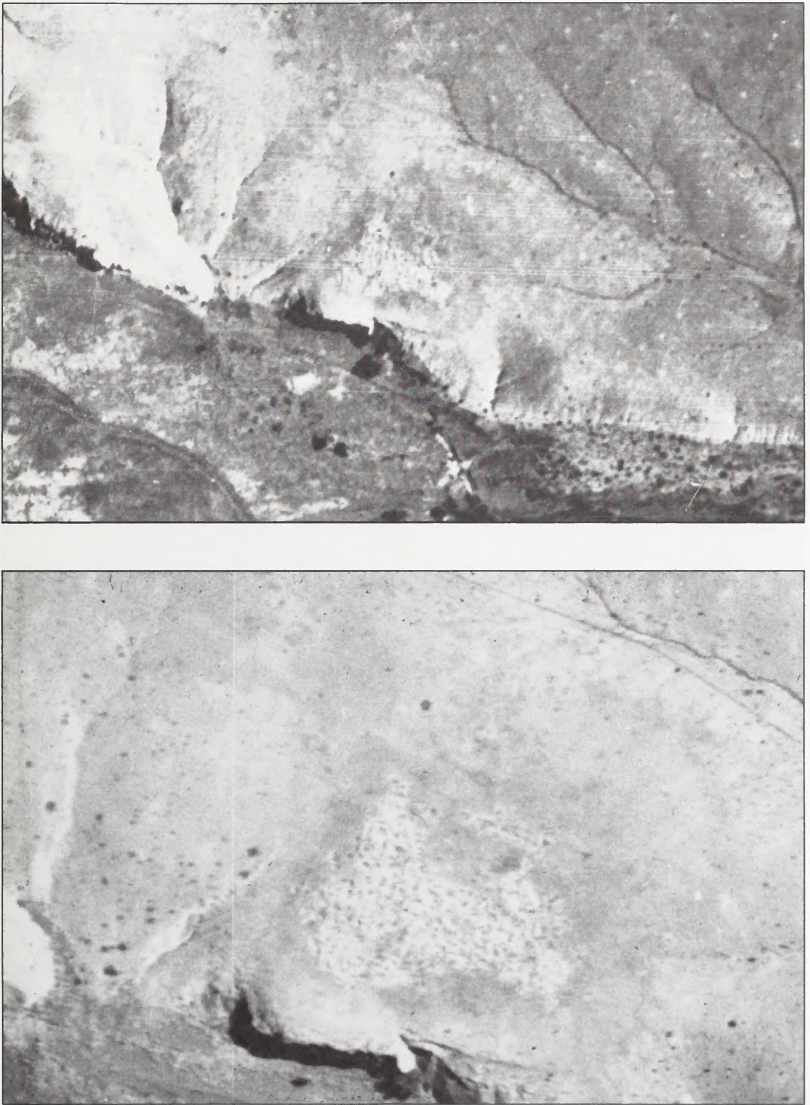


Figure 5. Aerial photographs of Old Town: 1937 USDA aerial photograph of Old Town (*top*); close-up of Area A (*bottom*) (north is to left).



Figure 6. 1951 USDA aerial photograph of Old Town.



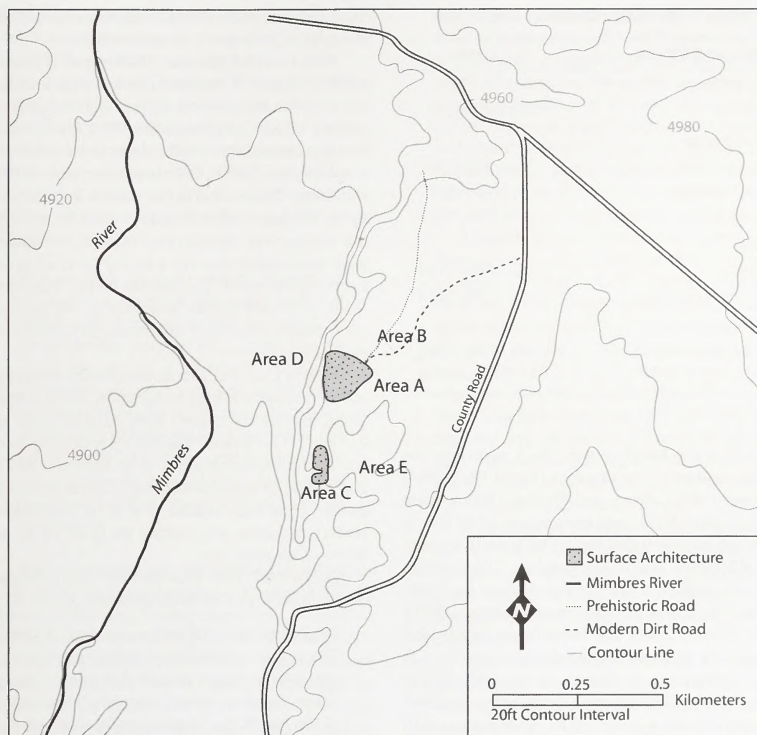


Figure 7. Map of Old Town based on 1989–2003 investigations, showing Areas A–E.

However, there are also Early and Late Pithouse period remains as well. Located in the floodplain, Area D has no known architecture, but decades of plowing would have destroyed any surface architecture that may once have been present. On the other hand, Area D has an important stratified midden deposit at the base of the cliff.

It is important to note that there has been no over-arching, long-term research plan during the 15-year period of work at Old Town. This is partly because of the uncertain prospects for additional excavation seasons. There has, however, been a general, if incomplete, effort to sample most parts of the site, with each season basically building on the findings of the previous seasons. As a result of these factors,

the Three Circle phase (A.D. 800–1000) and Terminal Classic (ca. A.D. 1130–1180) components in Areas A and B have received the most attention; a modest amount of investigation has been dedicated to the Black Mountain phase remains in Area C. There has been far less excavation of earlier pit house remains, and, in an ironic twist, relatively few excavation efforts have focused on the very extensive Classic Mimbres period pueblo remains that have been so heavily disturbed by pothunters searching for pottery vessels.

The details and results of these excavations are presented in the following chapters. In a departure from traditional excavation reports, however, there is no separate chapter on the history of archaeological

**Table 1. Mimbres Cultural Sequence**

Period and Phase	Date
Early Pithouse	
Cumbre	A.D. 200–550
Late Pithouse	
Georgetown	A.D. 550–650
San Francisco	A.D. 650–800
Three Circle	A.D. 800–1000
Classic	
Classic	A.D. 1000–1130
Terminal Classic	A.D. 1130–1180
Post-Classic	
Black Mountain	A.D. 1180–1300
Cliff	A.D. 1300–1400

research in the Mimbres area. Such overviews are readily available in the literature (Brody 1977, 2004; LeBlanc 1983; LeBlanc and Whalen 1980; Lekson 1992; Shafer 2003), and the approach taken here is to present important findings at Old Town in the context of Mimbres regional archaeology. The Mimbres chronological sequence and terminology used here (Table 1) is derived from Anyon and LeBlanc (1984), Diehl (1997), Shafer and Brewington (1995), and the recently published systematics for the post-A.D. 1100 Mimbres area by Hegmon et al. (1999). Critical characteristics differentiating the periods and phases include, but are not limited to, architecture, wall construction technique, ceramics, mortuary practices, flaked stone implements, and site location.

## **Knowledge of Old Town Prior to 1989**

Because of its location at the lower end of the Mimbres River, the Old Town ruin became known to Anglo residents of the area in the mid-1800s. Beginning in 1849, the southern route to California from Texas and the eastern United States crossed the Mimbres in the immediate vicinity of Old Town (Couchman 1990). Similarly, in the 1850s, the Butterfield Overland Stage crossed the Mimbres just south of Old Town, largely following the route established in the 1840s. The stage-station compound can still be seen, and many segments of the stage road are still readily visible, particularly from the air. A small community known as Mowry City grew in this area during the

1850s, and a number of building remnants attributed to Mowry City can still be seen today.

After the Civil War, the U.S. Army established a number of forts in southwest New Mexico, including Fort Cummings to the east and Fort Bayard near modern Silver City (Couchman 1990; Myers 1968). The road, established by the Army to connect these two forts, crossed the Mimbres River just north of Old Town. This route is in part used as a county road today. In places where it has not been so used, the old ruts are still visible, often marked by mesquite trees and bushes that are a legacy of army mules fed mesquite beans. This and the earlier Butterfield Stage road have proven important in our study of the feature at Old Town interpreted as a prehistoric road or corridor.

Mowry City was almost completely abandoned once a railroad was built to the south, and this abandoned historic community gave the prehistoric site its name, "Old Town." The town's proximity to the site inspired its name, but a more important and far less benign by-product was that it also made people aware of the site, located as it is on a prominent landscape feature overlooking the river valley and Mowry City town site.

Duff (1902:397) provided the first published description of the Old Town archaeological site:

On a bluff one-half mile south-east of Old Town, which is twenty-two miles from Deming, overlooking a beautiful section of the valley, are very extensive remains. Here part of the buildings were evidently more than one story high, judging from the elevation of a portion of the remains above the level of the surrounding country. The outline of some sixty rooms shows at the surface of the ground. The bluff descends to the valley by an almost perpendicular fall of eighty feet, and the pueblo was built almost to the edge of the sheer descent.

Referring to black-on-white pottery vessels, Duff (1902:399) noted further that

from beneath the floor of one of the rooms in the ruins at Old Town, Mr. David Baker and myself took out four fine large ones, each inverted over the skull of a skeleton. They were found four feet beneath the surface, and were as fresh and nice in appearance as when placed there unknown ages before. The dead had been laid away with their heads to the east, and in the eastern end of the room.

Slightly later, Hough (1907:88) presented an equally brief description of the site, basically paraphrasing what Duff had written not long before.

A few years later, Clement Webster published a brief description of Old Town; but, like most to follow, he provided frustratingly little in the way of useful information. Webster explored much of the Mimbres area from 1889 to 1892 and published a number of articles on archaeological remains he saw. He (Webster 1912:106) described Old Town as follows:

This presents the same general appearance of nearly all others of this valley, many of which were much more fully examined by the writer than this one. This pueblo, like the others just spoken of, had been constructed of rounded and worn rock and adobe. Judging from the height of the ruins the houses would seem to have been not more than one story in height. The village consisted of many rooms compactly grouped, the walls of which could only be dimly traced without thorough exploration.

The most useful and informative early descriptions of Old Town resulted from the findings of E. D. Osborn, of Deming. He dug extensively at a number of Mimbres sites, amassing a number of large collections that he sold primarily to large museums in the northeastern United States. He brought his material to the attention of Jesse Walter Fewkes at the Bureau of American Ethnology, who arranged for the Smithsonian Institution, the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), and the Museum of the American Indian to purchase Osborn collections. Unfortunately, Osborn had essentially no documentation of his collection other than site provenience for most specimens, so both the Smithsonian Institution and the AMNH elected to send archaeologists to the area to gather contextual information on sites in what was then a virtual archaeological terra incognita.

Fewkes visited the area in 1913 and toured the sites with Osborn. As is indicated in the following full quotation of his published description of the site, Fewkes actually did some excavating at Old Town, although this was very poorly documented. Indeed, it is not possible to determine where he excavated. Nonetheless, Fewkes' 1914 publication, *The Archaeology of the Lower Mimbres Valley, New Mexico*, stands as the first major work on the area and is important as the best description of Old Town for many decades:

Near where the Mimbres leaves the hills and, after spreading out, is lost in the sand, there was formerly a "station" on the mail route, called Mimbres, but now known as Oldtown. Since the founding of Deming, the railroad center, the stage route has been abandoned and Mimbres (Oldtown) has so declined in population that nothing remains of this settlement except a ranch-house, a school-house, and a number of deserted adobe dwellings.

Oldtown lies on the border of what must formerly have been a lake and later became a morass or cienega, but is now a level plain lined on one side with trees and covered with grass, affording excellent pasturage. From this point the water of the Mimbres River is lost, and its bed is but a dry channel or arroyo which meanders through the plain, filled with water only part of the year. In the dry months the river sinks below the surface of the plain near Oldtown reappearing at times where the subsoil comes to the surface, and at last forms Palomas Lake in northern Mexico.

In June, when the author visited Oldtown, the dry bed of the Mimbres throughout its course could be readily traced by a line of green vegetation along the whole length of the plain from the Oldtown site to the Florida Mountains.

The locality of emergence of the Mimbres from the hills or where its waters sink below the surface is characteristic. The place is surrounded by low hills forming on the south a precipitous cliff, eighty feet high, which the prehistoric inhabitants chose as a site of one of their villages; from the character and abundance of pottery found, there is every reason to suppose this was an important village.

The Oldtown ruin is one of the most extensive seen by the author during his reconnaissance in the Deming Valley, although not so large as some of those in the Upper Mimbres, or on Whiskey Creek, near Central. Although it is quite difficult to determine the details of the general plan, the outlines of former rectangular rooms are indicated by stone walls that may be fairly well traced. There seem to have been several clusters of rooms arranged in rows, separated by square or rectangular plazas, unconnected, often with circular depressions between them.

There is considerable evidence of "pottery hunting" by amateurs in the mounds of





Figure 8. Nels Nelson's camp at the base of the cliff at Old Town, 1920 (Image No. 1561, photograph by Nels Nelson, courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History Library).

Oldtown, and it is said that several highly decorated food bowls adorned with zotic figures have been taken from the rooms. It appears that the ancient inhabitants here, as elsewhere, practised [sic] house burial and that they deposited their dead in the contracted position, placing bowls over the crania [here Fewkes referenced a schematic drawing of a burial].

The author excavated several buried skeletons from a rectangular area situated about the middle of the Oldtown ruin, surrounded on three sides by walls. The majority of the dead were accompanied with shell beads and a few turquoise ornaments, and on one was found a number of shell tinklers made of the spires of seashells. One of the skeletons excavated by Mr. Osborn appeared to have been enclosed in a stone cist with a flat slab of stone covering the skull. The remains of a corner post supporting the building stood upright on this slab. In another case a skull was found broken into fragments by the large stone that had covered it. Several skeletons had no bowls over the heads, an exceptional feature in Mimbres burials; and in some instances the bowl had been placed over the face. In the case of numerous infant interments the bowl covered the whole skeleton [Fewkes 1914:10–12].

Elsewhere in this publication, Fewkes illustrated a number of pottery vessels from Old Town, some purchased from Osborn and some acquired during his own excavations. In the provenience information for a few vessels, there are some discrepancies between the Fewkes publication and the various documents in the pertinent files in the National Anthropological Archives at the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH). Thus, Fewkes's 1914 publication identifies some vessels as being from other sites, whereas labels on original photographs or drawings in the archives indicate that the vessels are from Old Town. There seems to be no way to determine which is correct.

As was the case with the Smithsonian Institution, the AMNH wanted contextual information on the large number of Mimbres pottery vessels purchased from Osborn. Pliny Goddard, AMNH Curator of Ethnology, made the following statement in a letter to Osborn: "A museum of this sort ought always to be interested more in the facts and conditions concerning its collections than in the collections themselves" (P. Goddard to E. D. Osborn, letter, 15 June 1920, Department of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History). Accordingly, AMNH archaeologist Nels Nelson met with Osborn in 1920 and took essentially the same tour as Fewkes had 7 years earlier (Figure 8). Nelson's unpublished notes on the sites visited are invaluable, in particular, for



his sketch maps of the different ruins. Although his verbal description of Old Town is less robust than for other sites, his maps and plan are quite useful and stand as key documents for the site. Moreover, the few photographs taken by Nelson are historically interesting and architecturally intriguing, as discussed in Chapter 4.

For those whose visual image of Old Town is based on recent visits to the site or photographs like that in LeBlanc (1983:92, Monochrome Plate 8), it is perhaps useful to read Nelson's more general and insightful description of Mimbres sites written in a letter to Goddard: "In general, the ruins dug into are a sorry sight to behold; yet even some of the most demolished would yield valuable architectural data still and more likely plenty of specimens" (N. Nelson to P. Goddard, letter, 10 December 1920, Department of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History).

In his manuscript describing the sites he visited during his 1920 trip to the Mimbres valley, Nelson (1920:29) wrote the following about the Old Town area:

The place is only a short distance above where the Mimbres sinks into the sand. The locally expanded valley floor or bottom through which the broad channel winds is from one half to three quarters of a mile wide and looks like a meadow, the stream bank as well as the banks of two long sloughs being lined with cottonwoods and willows. The meadow site is said to have been a lake within the memory of people now living, but that may have been artificial. Yet water now (November 22) stands in the shallow side sloughs.

Nelson designated the southern portion Site 10 (our Area C) and the Classic Mimbres pueblo area Site 11 (our Area A). These are shown on his photo and sketch map of the site complex (Figures 9 and 10). Nelson (1920:29–30) made the following observations about Site 10:

Small site, located ca. 200 yds. South of No. 11, on same terrace and nearly same height, not quite—a ravine encroaching on it from the east. There appear to have been three small houses, the largest, probably having contained several rooms, being at the north end. Some digging has been done, but little found. Sherds and worked stone are present. Not more than one or two bottom courses of the masonry left.

As discussed more fully in Chapter 7, this is an important observation on the Black Mountain phase architecture in Area C, part of which we have since excavated. The relevant point here is that this late, predominantly coursed-adobe architecture did in fact incorporate a good deal of masonry in part of this room block.

For his Site 11 (our Area A) his written description is even briefer and has relatively little meaningful architectural information. Far more important are his photographs and measured sketches of the Classic Mimbres pueblo. His plan of the pueblo is reproduced here as Figure 11, but much more attention is devoted to this and his photographs in Chapter 7. It should be noted here that there is some confusion in the labeling of Nelson's photographs at the AMNH; some clearly pertain to Old Town even though they are labeled as belonging to a site located a few miles up the Mimbres River (Pruitt Ranch [LA 1117]). In each case, the discrepancy is readily apparent to anyone familiar with the area.

Additional published notes on Old Town include a very short statement by Bradfield et al. (1928:108), and, in their report on excavations at the Swarts site, the Cosgroves noted that notched slabs similar to those they had encountered were present at Old Town (Cosgrove and Cosgrove 1932). Lambert (1956) briefly reported some figurines from Old Town in the Thompson collection and, a year later, published a brief article on an exhibit of Mimbres area artifacts at the Museum of New Mexico (Lambert 1956). This article illustrated a few objects from Old Town. Later, Minnis (1985) noted very minor testing in Area B in 1978, which had been performed by the Mimbres Foundation (Site Z:5:14).

A number of publications present information from the 1989–2003 excavations at Old Town. Among the more substantive are a thesis on Three Circle phase architecture (Lucas 1996), a thesis on Three Circle phase ceramic compositional analysis (Chandler 2000), a thesis on formal flaked stone tools (Taliaferro 2004a), an article and dissertation on faunal remains (Cannon 2000, 2001), and articles on Mimbres macaws (Creel and McKusick 1994), the Black Mountain phase (Creel 1999a), ceramic compositional analyses (Creel et al. 2002, 2003), large communal pit structures (Creel and Anyon 2003), the environment (Creel 2006), and social organization (Creel 2007).

As noted previously, large numbers of individuals have been digging at Old Town since at least 1880. It is important to note that few, if any, knew the site was on federal property and protected; indeed,



Figure 9. Nels Nelson's photograph of Areas A and C, looking north, at Old Town (*top*) (Image No. 1559, photograph by Nels Nelson, courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History Library), and a partial view of pueblo ruins (his Site 11) opposite Taylor Mountain, Mimbres Valley, view south (*bottom*) (Image No. 1564, photograph by Nels Nelson, courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History Library).

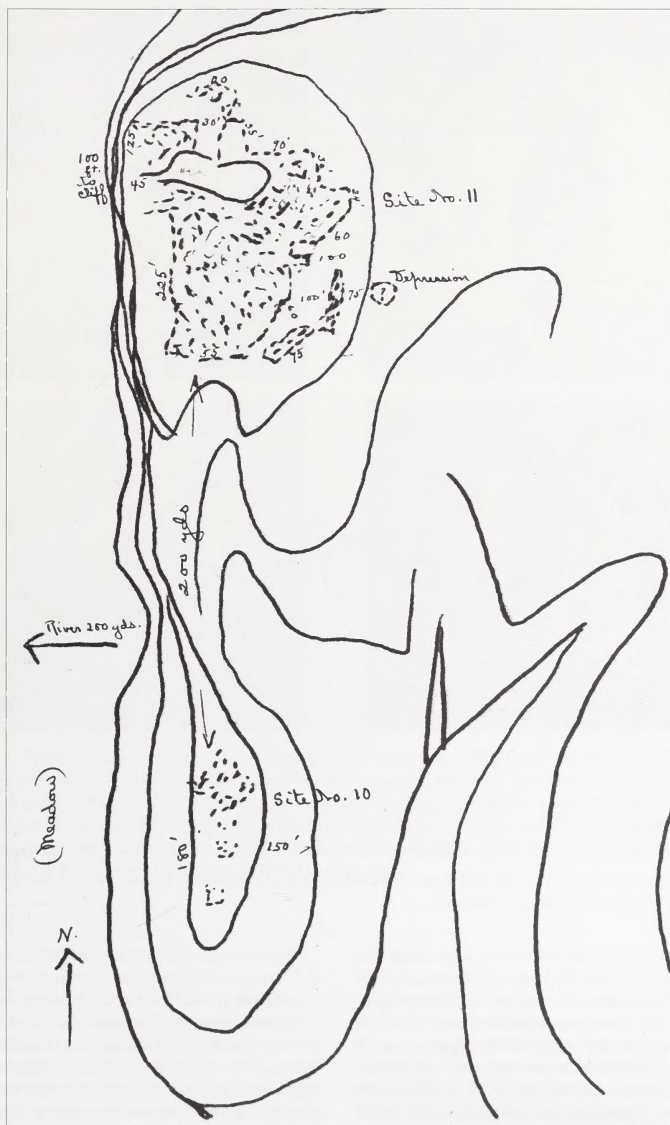


Figure 10. Nels Nelson's sketch map of Old Town Areas A and C (his Sites 10 and 11) (courtesy Department of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History).



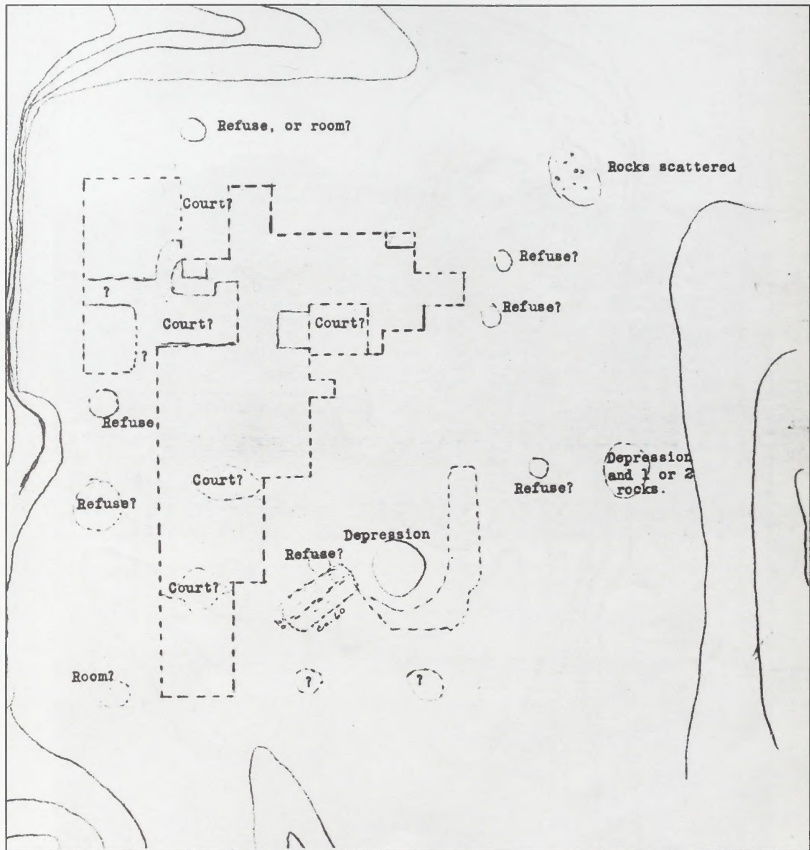


Figure 11. Nels Nelson's map of Old Town Area A (his Site 11) (courtesy Department of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History).

relative to the archaeological site, land status was determined only after the Mimbres Foundation work in 1975. During the course of the Old Town Project, we acquired a modest amount of information from the previous, mostly uncontrolled, digging. For the most part, this includes information about pottery vessels from the site; but, beyond that, little of use is available. However, there are a few bits of useful information from V. F. Tannich's digging in the late 1920s and 1930s; Edwin Hyatt's, in the 1930s; and Mary Alice and John King's, in the 1960s.

Some of the most specific information comes from V. F. Tannich's modestly documented digging. He dug extensively at Old Town and kept some records on individual excavated graves and the objects he found. Tannich also made occasional notes on architectural features. He eventually sold his collection to Fain White King in Wycliffe, Kentucky, who in turn sold parts of it to the University of Arkansas Museum and to what is now the St. Louis Art Museum (see Figure 12 for photos of some of Tannich's collection). The remainder could not be accounted for during the





Figure 12. Photographs of some of V. F. Tannich's collection, only part of which is from Old Town (courtesy of University of Arkansas Museum): secondary cremation from Old Town, in container and with cover vessels (Negative 000304) (*top left*); ornaments, figurine, mosaic, stone pipe, and other items (Negative 000296) (*top right*); projectile points, none specifically identifiable as originating from Old Town (Negative 000297) (*bottom left*); a selection of ornaments, none specifically identifiable as originating from Old Town (Negative 000295) (*bottom right*).

collections research portion of the Old Town Project. In his unpublished notes on file at the University of Arkansas Museum, Tannich described finding a secondary cremation in a Mimbres Black-on-white bowl covered by another bowl of the same type (see Figure 12a). He also noted that it was found in the same room as cremations discovered by another individual who dug considerably at Old Town, R. W. West. This room was in the north-central portion of the Classic

Mimbres pueblo but cannot be specifically located today. Beyond that bit of information, comparatively little useful data exists primarily because, for the most part, one cannot determine where Tannich was digging at the site. His collection is notable, though, for its documentation and cataloging.

During an interview conducted on site, on June 18, 1991, Edwin Hyatt recounted that he dug one room in the southwest portion of the Classic Mim-

bres pueblo in the early 1930s. My interview notes read as follows:

This room, presumably dug pretty thoroughly, had a floor ca six feet below surface at that time; the bottoms of subfloor burial pits were ca eight feet deep (from surface). Mr. Hyatt recalled no hearth but it may be that he dug only along the walls since he was after burials and everyone knew, of course, that burials are along walls. He got 25 burials, each with a vessel, from beneath the floor of this room. No other offerings with burials, or other items in the room were recalled or mentioned. Sometime thereafter, when he lived in a 2-story house in Deming, a fire destroyed the items he had recovered.

Another interesting interview from an individual who had dug at Old Town was conducted by Jerry Gonzales for a term paper in a New Mexico history class at Western New Mexico University (manuscript on file, Western New Mexico University Museum). Gonzales interviewed Louis Quarrell in 1975 about his digging in Old Town that began in the 1960s. According to the interview, Quarrell "discovered" about 150 rooms, although it is not clear that he dug in that many. Based on the pottery types mentioned, it seems likely that he dug primarily in Area A and perhaps in Area C as well. For the most part, Quarrell describes typical Mimbres burials he found in the corners beneath room floors. In addition, he noted that cremations were "very abundant," usually accompanied by two or three pottery vessels, and contained "quite a few turquoise pendants." He collected more than 300 vessels, the majority of which he described as black pots; about 75 were Mimbres Black-on-white vessels. According to Quarrell, one of his best "story bowls" was found at Old Town. This vessel depicted six hunters holding weapons as they stalked six wild turkeys.

In the 1960s, John and Mary Alice King and a number of their friends excavated in many parts of Old Town (Moyer 1980:82–87). The Kings made a sketch map of the site and kept some records, and they always made their collections available to researchers, including me. To date, because we have not excavated in most of the areas where they dug, the information they recorded cannot be adequately used. However, in matching vessel fragments from their collection to those found during our excavations, we have been able to identify, at least tentatively, one room where they dug. The Kings did a fair amount of digging in the part of Area A that corresponds to our Unit 1 but found only

early burials (with Mimbres Black-on-white, Styles I and II, vessels). The overlying Classic deposits were by then already extensively destroyed.

In closing, I have to note the bulldozing that took place in the early 1970s. Two trenches were dug into the Classic pueblo area, one on the north-east side (where our Unit 1 began) and the other on the western side. Apparently, a substantial number of pottery vessels were recovered during this operation, despite the many decades of previous looting. For the most part, little useful information is available from this mechanized looting, but photographs of probably one-half of the vessels ( $n = 9$ ) are available in the Mimbres Archive at the Maxwell Museum, University of New Mexico. The potential significance of these vessels is discussed in Chapter 7.

## Major Contributions of the 1989–2003 Excavations

If our work has revealed anything, it is that important archaeological remains are still present at Old Town despite the extensive damage caused by generations of pothunters. As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, the most heavily damaged is the Classic pueblo, and there has been considerable erosion and pothunter disturbance at the Black Mountain phase pueblo as well. The devastation notwithstanding, our excavations have contributed important data to Mimbres archaeology, and some of these warrant mention here.

Perhaps most widely known is the fascinating information on large communal pit structures, or great kivas, and small kivas. This critical contribution includes new data on construction details, especially pertaining to dedicatory objects, and on ritual destruction procedures that appear to be characteristic of Mimbres ceremonial pit structures in general. In addition, comparative research has shown that special features, such as floor grooves/vaults, *sipapus*, and subfloor interments, are present in large communal pit structures at only two villages in the Mimbres valley, Old Town and Galaz.

Another important contribution relates to the late or terminal Classic pueblo. Despite the major damage at the pueblo, we were able to identify important architectural attributes, such as the large interconnected rooms, true veneers, and exterior doorways. Moreover, our careful attention to context has shown

that there was much Classic period building at Old Town after the introduction of what were previously considered to be post-Classic Mimbres pottery types. This has significant implications relating to chronology, interaction, and perhaps immigration and a multiethnic population.

Our extensive work in Area B shows that there is a group of pit structures that were at least partly contemporaneous around A.D. 900. Four of these are domestic pit houses, and one is a kiva. Opening onto a common area, the kiva and three of the pit houses form a courtyard group similar to those known in the Hohokam area. This is the first instance in the Mimbres area for which direct dating indicates at least partial contemporaneity of these structures.

A completely unexpected discovery during our project was the discovery of a long, linear feature running from the central part of Old Town north for at least 600 m. This has been referred to as a road, following use of that term in the northern Southwest because of similar characteristics. Its discovery in 1994 marked the first instance that a prehistoric road had been recognized in the Mimbres and, among other things, led to the location of the great kivas and related features.

Finally, our artifact analyses have also made significant contributions, some of which have been

published in part elsewhere, the remainder presented in Volume 2. These include analyses of faunal remains (Cannon 2000, 2001; Creel and McKusick 1994; Sanchez 1992, 1996); chemical compositional analysis of ceramics (Creel et. al. 2002; Creel et. al. 2003); and chemical compositional analysis of obsidian artifacts, particularly projectile points, from Old Town and other Mimbres sites (Taliaferro 2004a, 2004b). The compositional analyses of ceramics and obsidian were conducted in collaboration with many other Mimbres area research projects, particularly the NAN Ranch and Eastern Mimbres archaeological projects.

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, some of our findings suggest that Old Town was one of two preeminent communities along the Mimbres River until about A.D. 1200, the other being Galaz in the upper portion of the valley. This is based largely on the presence of the previously noted unusual features in the large communal pit structures at these two sites, a distinction paralleled by the presence of multiple macaws at both sites. The presence of the road would appear to be unique, although it is unclear whether this is truly the case. It is interesting to note that all of the traits that distinguish Old Town and Galaz seem to be ritual in nature, suggesting that some ceremonial activities took place only at these two large communities.





# Excavation Methods and Analytical Approach

With the exception of the initial 1989 season, our excavations were directed toward resolving questions raised either during a previous season or during analysis. In many cases, pit structures or surface rooms not excavated to the desired extent in one season were the focus of continued work in a later year.

## Horizontal and Vertical Control: The Site Grid

All excavations were tied to the arbitrary grid established on the site at the beginning of the 1989 season (Figure 13). This grid was based on magnetic north, and a series of steel reference points was placed in various places around the site for permanent reference, both horizontally and vertically. All measurements were metric. The entire site is in the northwest quadrant of the arbitrary grid, and the primary vertical reference point (100.00 m) was the top of the steel rod driven into bedrock at grid point N998 W1000. For the first few years, a transit was used to take elevations, whereas horizontal locations were usually determined by triangulation from grid points, most of which were set near excavation units. In later seasons, a total data station was used to determine all horizontal and vertical locations.

It should also be noted that the site grid was tied into the grid that was established for aerial photography prior to the beginning of excavations. The aerial-photography grid is based on feet, and the imagery was used to create a contour map of Area A. This was later converted to metric units and constitutes the basis of the contour map of Area A used herein (see Figure 13). Areas B and C, however, were mapped later.

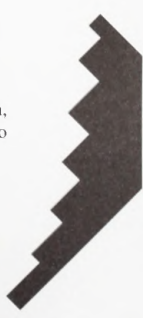
## Excavation Units and Feature Designation

Regardless of objective and year, all excavation was documented first by excavation unit, then by feature or room (or arbitrary excavation), and by additional context as appropriate. Excavation unit numbers were assigned in one series for the entire site, based on the order of excavation (Table 2). For example, Unit 1 is in Area A, whereas Unit 4 is in Area B. Summaries of the units are presented in Chapter 3.

Features and suspected features within an area (A, B, C, or D), however, were designated with a separate number series for each area, again, in order of discovery. Thus, the second feature excavated in Area A was designated as Feature A2 and eventually identified as Room A2. Similarly, the second feature in Area B, initially designated as Feature B2, was quickly determined to be a pit structure and was thereafter referred to as Room B2. Feature designations were used largely for convenience in recording; they also allowed for documentation before the type of feature was determined. Features include pit structures, surface rooms, storage pits, adobe-mixing basins, burials, and even distinctive deposits. Indeed, a number of prehistoric pits were minimally excavated or not excavated at all and are thus not known well enough to ascertain type. Features are listed in Table 3.

## Magnetometer Survey and Augering

Two additional methods of subsurface exploration, magnetometer survey and augering, were also used to



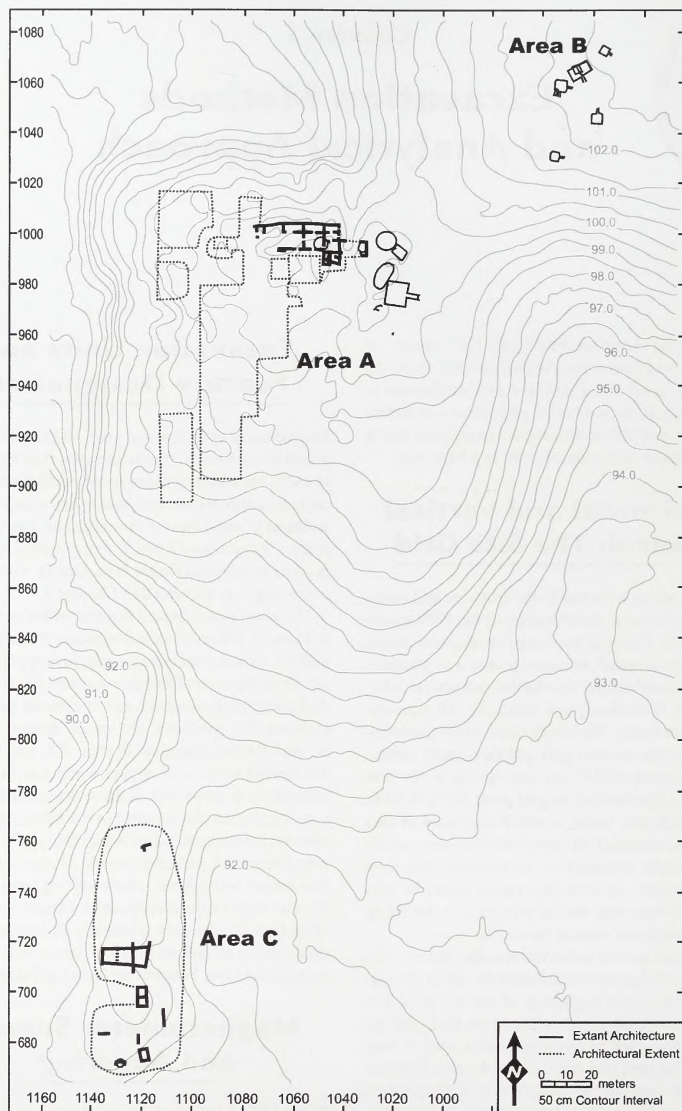


Figure 13. Contour map of Areas A, B, and C with grid and principal architecture.

**Table 2. List of Excavation Units at Old Town Ruin**

Unit	Area	Description
1/34–36	A	Terminal Classic pueblo room block and underlying pit structures
2	A	large depression, apparently nonarchitectural
3	D	test unit in stratified midden at base of cliff
4	B	Three Circle phase pit house
5	B	remodeled Three Circle phase pit house and surface room
6	A	test in southeast Area A, no features documented
7	A	plaza area in central Area A, Three Circle phase pit structure
8	B	magnetic anomaly test; no prehistoric feature found
9	B	Three Circle phase pit house
10	A	storage pit
11	B	magnetic anomaly test; no prehistoric feature found
12	B	magnetic anomaly test; no prehistoric feature found
13	B	test of low rise; no prehistoric feature found
14	C	Black Mountain phase pueblo rooms and underlying pit house remains
15	C	trench from Black Mountain phase pueblo plaza into presumed room block
16	C	extensively looted Black Mountain phase pueblo rooms with underlying early pit house and storage pits
17	C	test probably in disturbed and eroded Black Mountain phase pueblo room
18	C	large Black Mountain phase pueblo room with underlying storage pits
19	B	masonry-walled pit house, Room B10
20	B	test pit eventually incorporated into Unit 21
21	B	series of 3 superimposed Three Circle phase pit structures
22	A	Three Circle phase great kiva and other features
23	A	trench dug to locate/identify prehistoric road
24	B	trench across prehistoric road
25	C	duplicates Unit 18
26	C	Black Mountain phase pueblo rooms with storage pits
27	C	test pit in plaza of Black Mountain phase pueblo
28	C	1-x-1-m test pit on east slope of ridge
29	C	1-x-1-m test pit on east slope of ridge
30	B	test trench, no prehistoric feature found
31	A	partial excavation of 2 Three Circle phase pit structures
32	A	testing/partial excavation of 2 great kivas, 1 small kiva, burials, and a platform associated with Burial 18
33	D	test unit in stratified midden at base of cliff
35	A	test pit, corner of pit structure A120

Table 3. List of Feature/Room Numbers at Old Town Ruin

Feature	Unit	Description	Investigation
A1	1A	Terminal Classic pueblo room	remnant excavated
A2	1C	Terminal Classic pueblo room	excavated
A3	1C	Terminal Classic pueblo room	remnant excavated
A4	1C	Terminal Classic pueblo room	remnant excavated
A5	1A	Three Circle phase pit house	excavated
A6	1C	Terminal Classic pueblo room	remnant excavated
A7	1C	Terminal Classic pueblo room	excavated
A8	6	possible room of uncertain type/age	minimal investigation
A9	1C	Terminal Classic pueblo room with ventilator	east and west walls trenched
A10	7	Three Circle phase pit house and related features	excavated
A11	1C	Terminal Classic pueblo room	walls trenched
A12	1C	Georgetown phase pit house	partially excavated
A13	10	circular storage pit (A13-1) and small pit (A13-2), age uncertain	half excavated
A14	22	adobe-mixing pit	excavated
A15	22	small, shallow pit, possibly natural	excavated
A16	22	large communal pit structure, Three Circle phase	mostly excavated
A17	23	large pit, possibly a pit structure	unexcavated
A18	22	pit	excavated
A19	22	probably posthole	excavated
A20	22	pit	excavated
A21	22	adobe-mixing pit	excavated
A22	22	adobe-mixing pit	excavated
A23	22	adobe-mixing pit	excavated
A24	22	small pit	excavated
A25a	22	small pit	excavated



Feature	Unit	Description	Investigation
A25b	22	small pit	excavated
A26	22	assigned to part of A16	
A27	22	adobe-mixing pit	excavated
A28	22	rock concentration above dog bones	excavated
A29	22	possible adobe-mixing pit	excavated
A30	22	Burial 13, adult female	excavated
A31	22	rock concentration in post destruction fill overlying A16	excavated
A32	22	rock concentration in post destruction fill overlying A16	excavated
A33	22	partially reconstructible, large Mimbres Black-on-white, Style II, bowl on top of Room A16 wall fall	excavated
A34	22	pit, function unknown	unexcavated
A35	22	adobe-mixing pit	excavated
A36	22	probable Classic Mimbres extramural adobe surface associated with Feature A35	partially excavated
A37	22	adobe-mixing pit	excavated
A38	22	adobe-mixing pit	excavated
A39	22	adobe-mixing pit	excavated
A40	32	Burial 14, adult male	excavated
A41	31	human bone concentration (disturbed context)	excavated
A42	31	bone concentration	excavated
A43	32	pit, function unknown	excavated
A44	32	probable posthole, extramural	excavated
A45	32	probable posthole, extramural	excavated
A46	32	pit, function unknown	excavated
A47	31	pit structure, San Francisco or Three Circle phase	partially excavated
A48	32	possible pit structure	1-x-1-m test pit
A49	31	pit structure, probably Three Circle phase	partially excavated

*continued on next page*

Table 3. (cont.)

Feature	Unit	Description	Investigation
A50	2	large depression in bedrock	partially excavated
A51	32	raised platform associated with A58	partially excavated
A52	32	pit in which Burial 18 (adult male) was interred	mostly excavated
A53	32	pit, function unknown	only one edge exposed
A54	32	ash/charcoal concentration	excavated
A55	31	adobe lump	excavated
A56	32	possible posthole	excavated
A57	1C	Terminal Classic pueblo room overlying southwest corner of Room A2	remnant excavated
A58	32	footing for freestanding wall set in A51	partially excavated
A59	32	pit structure, probably Three Circle phase	minimally tested
A60	1C	group of adobe-mixing pits, ash-filled basins, and adobe flooring possibly, but not definitely, inside a room	partially excavated
A61	1C	possible Terminal Classic pueblo room above A2 but below A57	partially excavated
A62	1C	Terminal Classic pueblo room	minimally tested
A63	32	posthole adjacent to pit structure A84, possibly part of wall post alignment	excavated
A64	32	posthole adjacent to pit structure A84, possibly part of wall post alignment	excavated
A65	32	probable burrow	partially excavated
A66	32	wall-like adobe feature	partially excavated
A67	32	circular large communal pit structure, probably Cumbre or Georgetown phase	minimally tested
A68	32	lumps of adobe apparently from A71 wall	excavated
A69	32	massive deposit of fill overlying large communal pit structures, apparently redeposited from other locations at site	tested
A70	32	possible shallow pit structure	tested
A71	22/32	D-shaped large communal pit structure, probably San Francisco phase	partially excavated
A72	32	rock concentration	excavated
A73	32	adobe-mixing pit	excavated
A74	32	pit	excavated

Feature	Unit	Description	Investigation
A75	22	ash/charcoal concentration in fill (A69) above A16	excavated
A76	32	adobe-mixing pit	excavated
A77	32	probable posthole	excavated
A78	32	probable posthole	excavated
A79	32	ash deposit in midden	excavated
A80	32	adobe-mixing pit	excavated
A81	22	storage pit	excavated
A82	32	group of postholes under A51 and A80	excavated
A83	32	Three Circle phase masonry kiva	partially excavated
A84	32	possible pit structure, probably San Francisco or Three Circle phase	partially excavated
A85	22	adobe-mixing pit	excavated
A86	32	possible pit structure, probably Three Circle phase	tested
A87	32	pit, function unknown	excavated
A88	22	adobe-mixing pit overlying fallen south wall of A16, apparently in A69 deposits	excavated
A89	32	large oval pit in bedrock beneath A51/58	partially excavated
A90	22	cluster of rocks and bones, possibly in disturbed fill of A16	excavated
A91	34	adobe-mixing pit	excavated
A92	1C/34	Terminal Classic pueblo room probably connected to A110	excavated
A93	1C/34	unexcavated Terminal Classic pueblo room, possibly a two-room suite like adjacent A92/110	unexcavated
A94	1C/34	unexcavated Terminal Classic pueblo room, possibly assigned to space containing two separate rooms	unexcavated
A95	22	pit or possible pit structure intersecting east edge of A71	unexcavated
A96	31	adobe-mixing pit	unexcavated
A97	22/32	postholes in bedrock beneath and predating A71	excavated
A98	32	deposit of reddish adobe in fill of burial pit A52 and beyond	excavated
A99	32	distinctive dome-shaped nearly sterile deposit beneath A51 and probably the initial fill for platform; partially overlies pit, A89	partially excavated

*continued on next page*

Table 3. (cont.)

Feature	Unit	Description	Investigation
A100	32	deposit immediately above A99, east of A58	partially excavated
A101	32	posthole	excavated
A102	22/32	probable burrow	excavated
A103	22/32	adobe-mixing pit dug into A71 wall fall	excavated
A104	22	arc of distinctive deposits in Burial 19 pit	excavated
A105	22	pit	excavated
A106	22/32	pit	excavated
A107	IC	extramural area east of rooms A9 and A112	partially excavated
A108	IC	courtyard area south of rooms A11 and A110	trenched along north and east sides
A109	IC	pair of pits in bedrock below Room A92	excavated
A110	IC	Terminal Classic pueblo room probably connected to A92	excavated
A111	IC	very small room with flagstone floor, added onto south side of Room A110	excavated
A112	IC	Terminal Classic pueblo room with ventilator	excavated
A113	IC	apparently extramural area, probably part of A108	tested
A114	IC	concentration of lithic artifacts	excavated
A115	IC	extramural pit	excavated
A116	IC	Terminal Classic pueblo room connected to Room A11 via doorway	partially excavated
A117	IC	masonry wall footing, east-west alignment adjacent to A111	partially exposed
A118	IC	vertical adobe, possibly in entrance to pit structure	barely exposed
A119	IC	Terminal Classic pueblo room	unexcavated
A120	35	rectangular pit structure	tested
A121	IC	ash/charcoal filled basin	excavated
A122	IC	adobe-lined basin	partially excavated
A123	IC	Classic pueblo room floor remnant	partially excavated
A124	IC	Classic pueblo room floor remnant	partially exposed



Feature	Unit	Description	Investigation
B1	4	assigned to what proved to be entryway of Room B2	excavated
B2	4	pit house, Three Circle phase	excavated
B3	4	extramural area immediately adjacent to north side of Room B2	partially excavated
B4	5	pit house, Three Circle phase	excavated
B5	4	extramural firepit or adobe-mixing basin north of Room B2	excavated
B6	5	surface masonry room partially overlying Room B4	excavated
B7	5	extramural surfaces and related postholes related to original entry of Room B4	partially excavated
B8	9	pit house, Three Circle phase	partially excavated
B9	21	large pit structure, Three Circle phase	excavated
B10	19	pit house, Three Circle phase	excavated
B11	21	kiva, Three Circle phase	partially excavated
B12	21	duplicates B11	
B13	21	remnant of rectangular pit structure mostly destroyed by construction of later Room B9	excavated
C1	14	Black Mountain phase pueblo room	excavated
C2	14	Black Mountain phase pueblo room	excavated
C3	16	Black Mountain phase pueblo room	partially excavated
C4	16	pit house, Early Pithouse period or Georgetown phase	excavated
C5	16	storage pit	excavated
C6	16	large pit, probably storage	unexcavated
C7	16	large pit, probably storage	unexcavated
C8	17	Black Mountain phase pueblo room	minimally tested
C9	14	probable pit structure partially underlying rooms C1 and C2	minor test
C10	18/25	Black Mountain phase pueblo room	half excavated
C11	26	Black Mountain phase pueblo room	partially excavated
C12	26	possible roasting pit (contained burned rocks and ash)	excavated
C13	26	Black Mountain phase pueblo room	tested

*continued on next page*

Table 3. (cont.)

Feature	Unit	Description	Investigation
C14	26	pit, not definitely cultural	excavated
C15	26	concentration of rocks; mano and metate fragment	excavated
C16	26	possible roasting pit (contained burned rocks and ash)	excavated
C17	26	pit structure, age unknown	tested
C18	26	large storage pit	tested
C19	18/25	storage pit with surrounding ring of postholes	excavated
C20	18/25	storage pit with surrounding ring of postholes	excavated
C21	18/25	group of features in bedrock beneath floor of Room C10; some or all may predate or be associated with C10	excavated
C22	27	slab-lined basin-shaped pit in plaza	excavated
C23	18/25	Black Mountain phase pueblo room	tested
C24	15	Black Mountain phase pueblo room	tested

locate potential features. Although the magnetometer surveys in 1993 (Hyndman 1993) and 2003 returned mixed results, the augering program yielded evidence of additional pit structures, including a complex of three superimposed structures that were not indicated by any surface manifestation.

As a result of the 1993 proton magnetometer survey in Areas A and B (Figure 14), several anomalies were chosen for testing during the summer 1993 season. The only one selected that proved to reflect a prehistoric feature was in the southeastern portion of Area A, and it (Feature A13-1 in Unit 10) turned out to be a large storage pit with a surrounding ring of postholes.

During the 2003 season, a Geometrics 858 cesium vapor magnetometer was used to survey some of the same area covered in 1993 (Figure 15), and, in general, the results were similar. However, the much finer-data collection grid produced seemingly clearer anomalies, particularly in Area A. There, two larger anomalies stood out and were selected for testing to determine if they reflected pit structures. Upon testing the larger of the two (Unit 35), the corner of a pit structure (Room A120) was found, and it is tentatively assumed that the anomaly reflects this structure or perhaps an area containing several pit structures.

Using a 6-inch power auger (Figure 16), holes were drilled to bedrock on a 3-m staggered grid across Area B (Figure 17). The staggered 3-m interval was chosen as the minimum interval required to discover rooms larger than or equal to the known size of Rooms B2, B4, and B8, which were excavated prior to the augering program. Furthermore, to locate extramural, subsurface features in the vicinity of known rooms, holes were drilled on a 1-m staggered grid in the vicinity of Rooms B2, B4, and B8 (see Figure 16). Because the auger could not remove the dry, loose fill from the holes, bedrock elevation was calculated by measuring the probed depth to bedrock in each hole and subtracting that from the elevation of the ground surface. Because a pit house or other pit feature would presumably be represented by unusual depths in several adjacent cores, potential errors caused by areas of soft bedrock and large subsurface rocks (which may have resulted in depths for a particular core that were either too shallow or too deep with respect to the bedrock) were evaluated relative to nearby cores. The previously undiscovered complex of Rooms B9, B11, and B13—three stratigraphically superimposed structures—was immediately apparent as a large area containing many unusually deep cores.

## Investigation of Architecture

Although most of our work focused on locating and excavating architecture, a considerable amount also focused on nonarchitectural contexts. This was particularly the case in Areas A and D and less so in Areas B and C.

As noted previously, the most systematic investigation of domestic pit structures took place in Area B; investigations in Areas A and C were less extensive but still yielded important information. In these two areas, domestic pit structures were investigated primarily when encountered during excavations of surface pueblo architecture; however, most were only minimally excavated. In contrast, once it became clear that the low mounds in Area B represented pit structures rather than surface architecture, we chose to pursue investigation of this seemingly unusual situation. Thus, most of the work in Area B concentrated on locating and excavating architectural remains, and several techniques were used to locate structures. During the early phases of investigation, three pit houses were located by means of test excavations in small, low mounds characteristic of collapsed masonry structures.

Regardless of the area within the site, pit structures and surface rooms were excavated in both arbitrary and natural levels. Whenever possible, natural levels reflecting the construction and infilling of any feature, such as wall fall, roof fall, or floor, were used. Each level was described on specific forms used to document levels and in the daily notes for that excavation unit. Excavation rarely occurred outside the walls except to examine potential features and to determine wall thickness. The principal exception was in Unit 5, where excavations exposed several square meters of extramural-activity area outside of Room B4. Most fill was passed through ¼-inch screen, although feature fill was usually saved for fine screening or flotation. Artifacts collected from the screen, as well as any recovered in situ, were separated into categories based on material, and bagged as a single lot with a unique number for each level. Unique artifacts, such as large sherds and intact vessels, were exposed in situ, plotted in three dimensions, and assigned a unique lot number. Some artifacts and groups of artifacts, such as an in situ meal-making station in Room B11, were recorded as subfeatures. Datable specimens, specifically tree-ring and archaeomag-

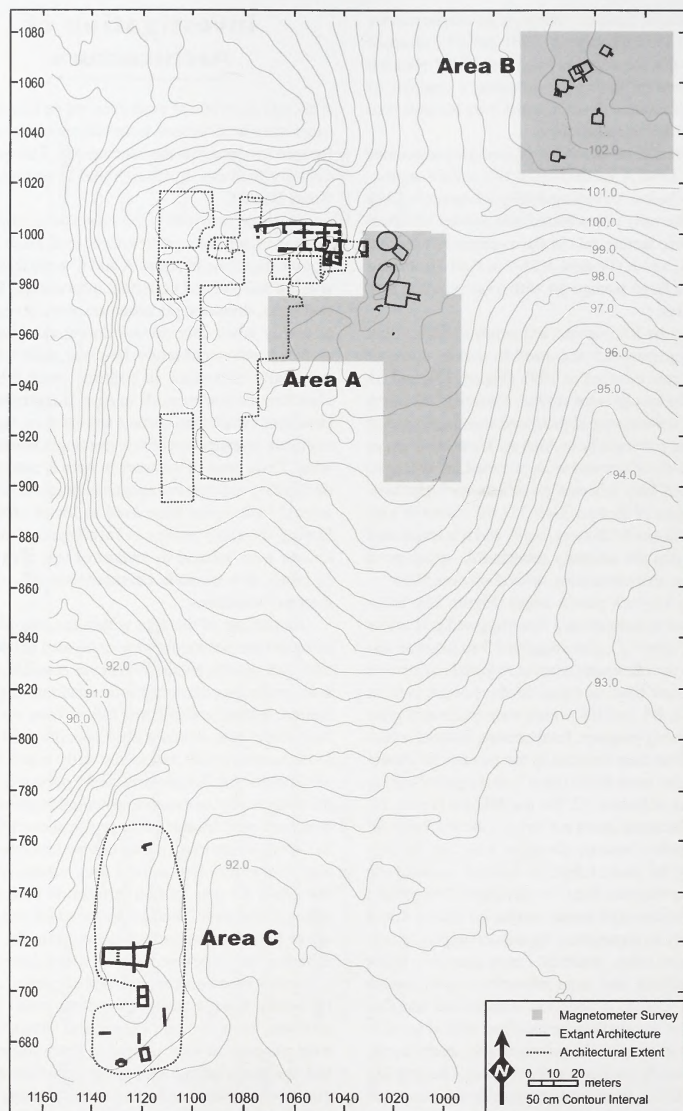


Figure 14. Map of Old Town showing areas surveyed by proton magnetometer in 1993.



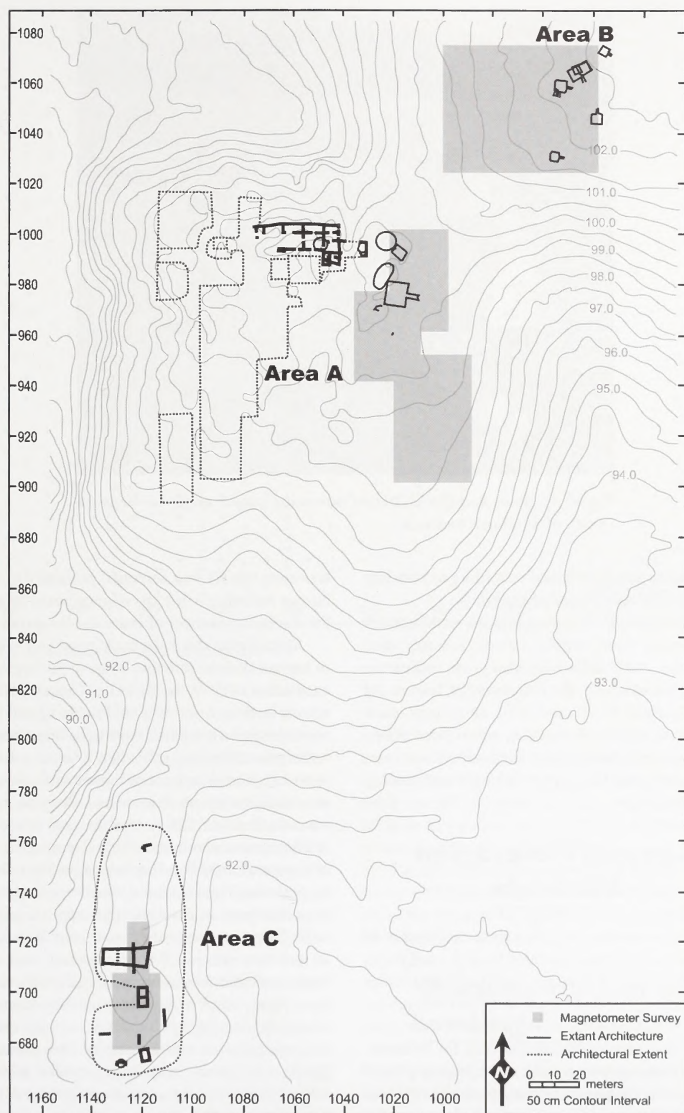


Figure 15. Map of Old Town showing areas surveyed with magnetometer in 2003.



Figure 16. Joan and David Jordan operating power auger to measure depth of fill above bedrock.

netic samples, were collected according to standard procedures for these types of materials.

Each room was described on an architectural unit summary form. Within a room, features such as postholes and hearths were also given subfeature numbers; for example, the first recorded feature for Room B2 would be Feature B2-1. In general, each subfeature was described on a separate feature form. In addition, subfeatures were designated in some non-room features, such as storage pits with surrounding rings of postholes.

## **General Excavation Methods**

In general, excavation was done by troweling, but in some cases, the fill was removed by picks and shovels. Much excavation was accomplished with smaller tools and brushes. Most fill was screened through ¼-inch mesh, although the fill from most features was fine-screened and/or collected in bulk for flotation. In some situations, particularly where surface pueblo rooms overlay pit house remains, pothunted fill was removed without screening because it was clear that deposits had been mixed. In many such situations,

however, the fill was screened primarily to recover human remains so that an estimate could be made of the minimum number of individuals represented.

Special note should be made regarding excavation of human skeletal remains. Prior to the beginning of excavation in 1989, the BLM Las Cruces District and representatives from the Zuni Pueblo agreed that any human remains recovered were to be reinterred on site at the point after analysis when it became safe to do so. A substantial amount of human bone was indeed recovered during our excavations, the great bulk of it from the Terminal Classic pueblo room block in Area A where pothunters had severely devastated a number of graves. Human bone has been so widely dispersed by pothunters that it would have been impossible to excavate there without encountering it regularly. In Area C, we encountered bone from looted graves as well but with much less frequency, and isolated teeth and other bones were occasionally found in many units. Much of this likely resulted from rodents burrowing through graves, but it seems clear that some disturbance and moving of human bone took place in prehistory when large amounts of fill were relocated to cover the great kivas in Area A. On the other hand, we also encountered and removed a very few undisturbed burials, most of them infants.

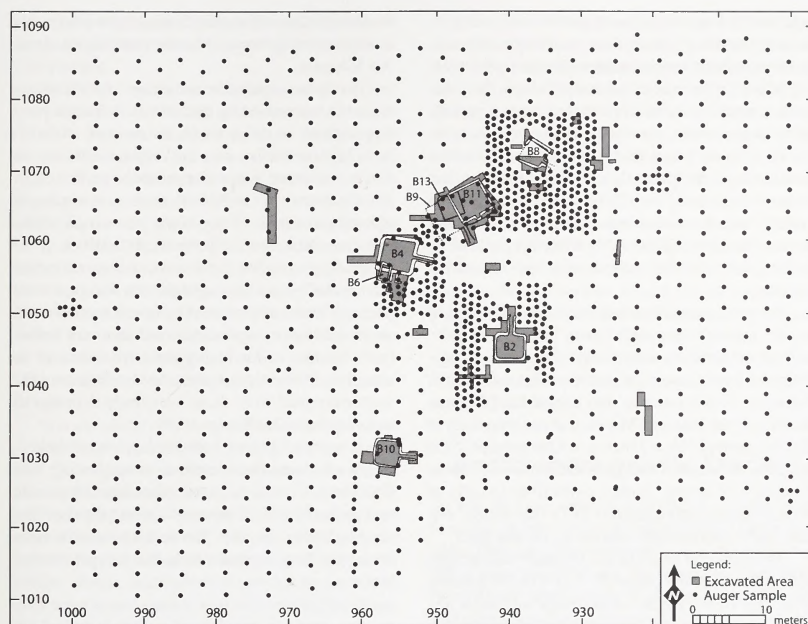


Figure 17. Map of auger tests in Area B.

The different types of material were bagged separately at the time of collection to provide for more efficient laboratory cleaning and processing. For the most part, preservation was quite good, and little was needed in the way of field or laboratory conservation. In all but the first few seasons, sequential lot numbers were assigned in the field, allowing the numbers to immediately be recorded on excavation forms. At first, information was recorded on a handwritten list, but later a computer was used. The use of simple numbers provided an efficient way to label artifacts and a link to provenience information and the excavation records.

Documentation included a daily journal, daily written notes for each excavation unit, appropriate forms, color and black-and-white photography, plans, and profiles. Forms used included arbitrary excavation-level forms, feature forms, and burial forms. Except for the first season, all documentation was

kept on archivally stable material, either paper for notes and forms or gridded mylar for larger plans and profiles. In addition, special forms were used to document archaeomagnetic dating samples. Similarly, all analysis records are on archivally stable paper. All electronic data have been printed.

The collection is permanently curated at the Laboratory of Anthropology, Museum of New Mexico, under the terms of an agreement with the BLM New Mexico State Office.

## Documentation of Existing Collections

Early in the project, it was agreed that an effort would be made to locate existing collections of artifacts and information from Old Town. The extent of looting at Old Town has been so great that collections research



was deemed an essential—if not the only—way to acquire certain kinds of data on the site and, ultimately, to obtain a more nearly complete understanding of the prehistoric community. Indeed, there has been so much destruction of Mimbres sites, especially large ones, that we are heavily dependent on existing data for all future analyses of Classic Mimbres archaeology. Although this portion of the project occurred primarily in 1990 and 1991, additional collections information was acquired intermittently during subsequent years. This effort has focused on collections curated in various museums around the country.

Several means have been used in the effort to locate materials from Old Town. These include literature and archive searches, interviews with archaeologists, interviews with private collectors, direct inquiries with museums, and use of the Mimbres Archive at the Maxwell Museum of Anthropology at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Together, these have resulted in the documentation of several surface collections (mostly of pottery sherds), approximately 180 whole pottery vessels, and important information on the site itself.

The principal result of the literature and archive search has been the preparation of a list of artifacts from Old Town held in various museums and a few private collections; this list is undoubtedly incomplete for both kinds of holders. In addition, there are several Old Town pottery vessels in certain museums that were without site provenience before this research effort; this is likely the case for many hundreds of other vessels, particularly those at the NMNH, the National Museum of the American Indian (formerly Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation), and the AMNH.

Another important result of the collections research has been the acquisition of contextual data on one major collection from Old Town. Data on more than 30 burials and on several rooms at Old Town have been organized, and the burial information is probably the only meaningful set of mortuary data we may ever get from the many hundreds of burials previously excavated at the site.

No collection that has been examined so far is from systematic excavations at Old Town, not even the material acquired by Fewkes in 1914. It is ironic that the best-documented and most useful collection was excavated by an amateur, V. F. Tannich, and sold to a private museum in Kentucky, which a few years later subdivided and sold the collection again. Part of this collection was not located during the collections

documentation effort, but there are portions at the University of Arkansas Museum and the St. Louis Art Museum.

For the most part, the collections discussed here were not recognized by the holders as federal property; indeed, in many cases, the holders could not have known this because the original collector did not, or would not, report site provenience. For example, the curator of the AMNH made an unsuccessful effort to determine if any of the items it purchased had come from federal property. In addition, much of the digging at Old Town was done by individuals who probably did not know the site was on federal property and thus protected by law. Interviews with private collectors were conducted on a very limited basis because of the highly sensitive nature of the situation. The only privately held collections that were examined were those previously documented as being from Old Town.

In terms of pottery vessels, the material held by major museums and identified as originating from Old Town is estimated at no more than 10 percent, and probably less, of the total amount that has been removed from the site. The bulk of material taken from Old Town appears to be held in private collections.

## **Analytical Procedures**

Analysis of artifacts and other materials has focused on undisturbed contexts and the kinds of materials that seemed to have the most potential for revealing significant spatial or temporal differences based in large part on analyses of other Mimbres sites. For example, previous analyses of flaked stone tools have found few formal tools other than projectile points but have found large numbers of cores used as hammer stones. We encountered the same situation at Old Town but have so few temporally distinctive objects in good context that we have devoted little attention to debitage and the nondiagnostic flaked stone. Similarly, faunal remains and even human remains, although possessing considerable inherent potential, retained comparatively little informational value because they derived largely from pothunter-disturbed fill. This was a particularly acute problem in Area A, where there were many remains from centuries of occupation within 2–3 m of fill. Indeed, there is strong evidence to suggest that some of the human remains cataloged as deriving from the Terminal Classic pueblo rooms actually came from underlying



graves disturbed by pothunters. It would be difficult to make these distinctions without expensive, destructive analysis.

In addition, given our efforts to assess all contexts relative to formation processes, we are confident that there was much recycling of material over the centuries of Old Town's occupation. That every type of ceramic sherd made prior to the A.D. 1100s is present as an inclusion in the construction adobe of the Terminal Classic pueblo rooms implies that lithic debris, faunal remains, and other common materials were similarly incorporated and therefore have no particular linkage to use of those rooms. Thus, a large portion of our "undisturbed" contexts in fact contained substantial quantities of artifacts as inclusions. We had precious few objects of any kind on floors or other surfaces except in some of the pit structures.

Our analytical efforts have thus focused on questions that could possibly be answered with our biased data. For example, considerable effort was devoted to chemical analysis of ceramics and obsidian projectile points, as they have some temporal significance even when found in disturbed contexts. Similarly, we looked at spatial differences in the frequency of some artifact classes, particularly those that seemed to be disproportionately associated with special buildings. We looked at artifact classes such as quartz crystals, palettes, shell bracelets, and stone bowls/mortars. We have also devoted special attention to information on tree species represented in buildings of different ages and sizes at Old Town. Finally, the human remains posed the same kinds of interpretive constraints as did artifacts; although we learned much, more information can surely be retrieved from additional study.

## **Chronometric Dating**

During the course of the Old Town project, several chronometric dating methods were used; attempted tree-ring and archaeomagnetic dating were the principal ones. In addition, as discussed below, radiocarbon dating of animal bones was used by Michael Cannon (2001) to order the stratified faunal samples targeted in his dissertation research.

### **Tree-Ring Dating**

During the course of our excavations, a large quantity of wood, charred and uncharred, was encountered and collected. Some was architectural wood and some

was fuel. Given the generally low yield of tree-ring dates from previous excavations in Mimbres sites, we made every effort to collect and submit as much material as possible to the Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research at the University of Arizona. This amounted to several thousand specimens, the great majority of which were lumps of charcoal less than 5 cm across. Only a relatively small portion of the total consisted of lengthy sections of intact timber, which can be attributed in part to the destruction of large pieces by pothunters. Potentially datable wood was present in the form of piñon pine, Ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, and perhaps spruce. As discussed more fully in Chapter 4, substantial quantities of juniper were present, but no specimen yielded a date. Those specimens that did yield dates are listed in Table 4. Discussion of those dates is presented in other chapters as appropriate.

## **Archaeomagnetic Dating**

As was the case with tree-ring dating, we attempted to collect archaeomagnetic dating samples where possible. This was particularly useful in assessing the use life of some pit structures. Many samples came from burned wall plaster, others came from interior hearths, and some came from extramural adobe-lined features first thought to have been outdoor cooking pits. All samples, except for the first two collected during the 1989 season, were analyzed at the Paleomagnetic Laboratory, Department of Geosciences, University of Texas at Austin. The first two were analyzed by Jeffrey Eighmy, Colorado State University. Several of these yielded dates (Table 5), most of which have been previously published. All of the data have subsequently been reevaluated in light of recent changes to the Southwest Master Curve. As is the case with the tree-ring dates, the archaeomagnetic dates are discussed in other chapters where pertinent.

## **Radiocarbon Dates from Faunal Specimens**

As part of his dissertation research on the Old Town faunal remains, Michael Cannon submitted 10 specimens from Old Town for accelerator mass spectrometry (AMS) radiocarbon dating of bone collagen (Table 6). With Cannon's permission, the following discussion of these samples is taken almost verbatim from his dissertation. For reasons discussed below, 9 of these samples were portions of jackrabbit (*Lepus* sp.)

Table 4. Tree-Ring Dates from 1989–2003 Excavations

Provenience	Species	Tree-Ring Laboratory No.	Inner Date A.D.	Outer Date A.D.
<b>Room A7</b>				
Disturbed fill	Douglas fir	MIM-760	1027	1074+vv
Beam on floor	Douglas fir	MIM-758	1071	1107+v
<b>Room A9</b>				
Disturbed fill	Douglas fir	MIM-815	871	928vv
Disturbed fill	Douglas fir	MIM-816	876	941vv
<b>Room A16</b>				
Beam on floor	piñon pine	MIM-799	785	858+vv
Beam fragment, fill A16-13 (center posthole)	piñon pine	MIM-801	785p	861vv
South roof support	Douglas fir	MIM-814a–d	715p	873vv
North roof support	Douglas fir	MIM-803	732p	873+v
<b>Room B8</b>				
Beam on floor	piñon pine	MIM-763 (a, b, c)	827p	875vv
Beam on floor	piñon pine	MIM-779 (a, b)	803	876vv
Beam on floor	piñon pine	MIM-778 (a, b)	828	886vv
Beam on floor	piñon pine	MIM-766	830p	888vv
Beam on floor	piñon pine	MIM-764	851	897+r
<b>Room B11</b>				
Beam on floor	piñon pine	MIM-773	767p	831+vv
Beam on floor	piñon pine	MIM-781	837	881vv

Key: p = pith ring present; r = less than a full section is present, but the outermost ring is continuous around available circumference; v = a subjective judgment that, although there is no direct evidence of the true outside on the specimen, the date is within very few years of being a cutting date; vv = there is no way to estimate how far the last ring is from the true outside; + = one or more rings may be missing near the end of the ring series whose presence or absence cannot be determined because the specimen does not extend far enough to provide an adequate check

tibiae, and 1 was a partial jackrabbit femur. To reduce the possibility of contamination, all but 2 specimens, which are noted below, were dated using only cortical bone. The collagen extraction and the AMS analyses were performed by Beta Analytic, Inc. Measurements of  $^{13}\text{C}/^{12}\text{C}$  ratios relative to the PDB standard were taken on these specimens, and the conventional radiocarbon-age values given in Table 6 are corrected for these measurements. Calibration of the radiocarbon ages into calendar years was performed by Beta Analytic using the INTCAL98 Radiocarbon Age Calibration program (Stuiver et al. 1998).

These dates were obtained for two reasons. First, Cannon wanted to ensure that the faunal specimens from key contexts were truly of the ages indicated by other criteria. Second, as discussed in his (Cannon

2001) dissertation, he attempted to obtain fluoride dates from a larger number of faunal specimens and hoped to use radiocarbon dates taken on a subset of these to “calibrate” the fluoride dates into approximate calendar-year values. The sampling strategy used to select bones for radiocarbon dating was thus a compromise between the goals of obtaining radiocarbon dates for specimens from the most useful contexts and of obtaining radiocarbon dates that would allow for calibration of the fluoride dates. Since the fluoride dating effort is not discussed here, the interested reader should consult Cannon’s (2001) dissertation.

In order to reduce potential errors in the fluoride dating that might result from differential rates of fluoride absorption between the bones of different taxa

**Table 5. Archaeomagnetic Dates from 1989–2003 Excavations**

Provenience	Sample No.	Date 1 A.D.	Date 2 A.D.
<b>Room A16</b>			
Wall plaster, walls combined	20, 22, 26	900–925	
<b>Room B2</b>			
Wall plaster	2	700–750	900–950
<b>Room B4</b>			
Wall plaster, 3 walls combined	3, 4, 5	700–725	900–925
Wall plaster, south entryway	6	660–790	830–915
<b>Room B8</b>			
Wall plaster, north wall	7	745–810	
Wall plaster, south wall	11	940–970	
<b>Room B10</b>			
Wall plaster, east wall	12, 14	710–780	840–890
<b>Room B11</b>			
Wall plaster, east wall	13	710–740	
<b>Room C2</b>			
Hearth	9	1005–1035	1145–1330
<b>Room C3</b>			
Hearth	8	1025–1275	

or between different elements from the same taxon, only samples from a single element of a single taxon were used for radiocarbon dating. The one exception is discussed below. Numbers of specimens of any individual element from artiodactyl taxa were far too small to allow this to be done, so all samples submitted were from jackrabbits, which are the most abundant taxon present at Old Town. The tibia was used because this is the only jackrabbit element for which specimens large enough to be used for both radiocarbon and fluoride dating are abundant. AMS dating of bone collagen requires a sample that weighs at least 2 g, and fluoride dating requires a sample that weighs at least 0.1 g. A complete jackrabbit tibia weighs on the order of 6 or 7 g, so approximately one-third of a complete tibia is necessary to obtain both a radiocarbon date and a fluoride date from a single specimen. Specimens that are unfragmented enough to be this large are rare in the Old Town assemblage. Contexts for which dates could be obtained were somewhat limited because large jackrabbit-tibia specimens are not present in all proveniences. However, Cannon judged that this limitation was worthwhile, given the

increased precision of the fluoride dates that should have resulted from the use of a single element. He also attempted to select specimens for radiocarbon dating that would provide coverage of a range of time periods in order to facilitate the calibration of the fluoride dates.

Table 6 presents the provenience of each specimen that was radiocarbon dated, as well as the phase to which each provenience appears to date based on architectural and ceramic criteria and previously obtained chronometric dates. It can be seen that seven of the bone radiocarbon dates are consistent with these phase assignments, whereas three are not (see the period and phase age ranges in Table 1).

Four dates were obtained on specimens from the fill of Three Circle phase rooms: three from Room A5 and one from Room B2. The 2-sigma ranges for all of these dates fall more or less entirely within the date range of the Three Circle phase. It is reasonable to conclude from these dates that the fill of these rooms dates mostly to the Three Circle phase, a conclusion consistent with other chronological evidence. In addition, it is important to note that the dates from



Table 6. AMS Radiocarbon Dates on Rabbit Bone

Provenience	Specimen No.	Laboratory No.	Conventional Radiocarbon Age (B.P. $\pm 1\sigma$ )	$\delta^{13}\text{C}/\text{C}$ Ratio (‰)	Calibration Intercept (A.D.)	$2\sigma$ Calibration (A.D.)
<b>Room C2</b>						
Floor context	1919-50	Beta-150688	880 $\pm$ 40	-12.5	1180	1030–1250
<b>Room A7</b>						
Floor material	1602-4	Beta-150687	980 $\pm$ 40	-17.0	1030	990–1160
<b>Room A2</b>						
Floor material	343-2	Beta-150684	1000 $\pm$ 40	-16.6	1020	980–1060, 1080–1150
<b>Room A5</b>						
Fill	87-305	Beta-150683	1110 $\pm$ 40	-14.5	960	870–1010
Fill	87-286	Beta-150682	1140 $\pm$ 40	-13.6	900	790–990
West: Level 6	378-25	Beta-150685	1130 $\pm$ 40	-14.4	900	790–1000
<b>Room B2</b>						
Fill	785-3	Beta-150686	1130 $\pm$ 40	-16.4	900	790–1000
<b>N 991, W 1027</b>						
Level 3	3598-17	Beta-155846	1060 $\pm$ 40	-13.8	990	900–1030
Level 17	3878-27	Beta-155847	1480 $\pm$ 40	-20.5	600	530–650
<b>N 992, W 1029</b>						
Level 5E	4294-10	Beta-150689	1260 $\pm$ 40	-14.9	770	670–880

Room A5 are all similar, suggesting that the fill of this room contains material that dates to a relatively short time span.

Likewise, there are two dates taken on specimens that come from the floor construction material of the two Terminal Classic rooms whose samples were used in the faunal analysis, and the 2-sigma calibration ranges for these dates correspond more or less to the date range for the Classic phase. The specimen from A2 was recovered from the third of five successive floors in this room, and the specimen from A7 was recovered from the uppermost floor in this room.

One date was obtained on a specimen from either floor-surface or roof-fall context in Room C2, a Black Mountain phase pueblo room in Area C. Exact context is uncertain because the roof fall in this room lay directly on the floor. Because of its small size, this tibia specimen was dated using collagen from the proximal epiphysis and the proximal portion of the shaft, whereas most of the radiocarbon samples

discussed here were dated using only collagen from the cortical bone of the shaft. The cancellous material that is present in the ends of bones is more likely to be contaminated by the presence of materials such as rootlets than is cortical bone. No such contaminants were visible in this specimen, however, and the fact that the date from this specimen is consistent with a Black Mountain phase age suggests that contamination is not a problem.

Three radiocarbon dates were obtained on faunal specimens recovered from extramural midden deposits in Unit 31 east of Rooms A1 and A5. These deposits were expected to provide useful faunal samples for Cannon's analysis, but the bone dates from them are inconsistent with the rest of the available information about their ages, indicating that they were unsuitable for inclusion in his analysis.

Two of these Unit 31 dates come from a test pit that is designated by its grid coordinates of N991 W1027. This unit was dug in 23 arbitrary levels to a



depth of over 1 m from the surface. The ceramics recovered from the upper levels suggest that they date to the Terminal Classic, whereas those from the lowest levels indicate a Three Circle phase age (Creel 1999b). The two dates obtained from jackrabbit bone found in this unit, however, are both considerably older than the ages suggested by the ceramics found in the same levels.: The date from Level 3 (near the top) is more consistent with a Three Circle phase age than a Terminal Classic age, and the date from Level 17 (near the bottom) is more consistent with a Georgetown phase age than a Three Circle phase age.

The final bone radiocarbon date came from a test pit with its southeast corner located at grid coordinates N992 W1029. This unit, which was immediately adjacent to the east wall of Room A1 and close to the N991 W1027 test pit, was dug in 12 arbitrary

levels. After 4 such levels had been excavated, it was recognized that the western half of the unit had been placed in a looter's pit, so, beginning with Level 5, the disturbed material in the western portion of the pit was kept separate from the apparently undisturbed material in the eastern portion. A specimen for radiocarbon dating was selected from the eastern portion of Level 5, which contained ceramics that suggested a late Classic Mimbres age.

Like the two dates from the test pit located at N991 W1027, however, the date from the bone found in this test pit is considerably earlier than the age that is indicated by the ceramic content from the same level. This suggests that disturbance has affected the eastern portion of this unit in addition to the western portion, or at least that some of the bones from the disturbed part of the unit somehow became mixed with those from the undisturbed part.



## The Excavation Units

As noted in Chapter 2, excavation unit numbers were assigned in one series for the entire site, based on the order of excavation. In this chapter, each unit is described and the principal findings summarized. Architecture and other features are described in detail in Chapters 5–11.

### Unit 1/34/36 (Area A)

The most extensive excavations undertaken during the Old Town project were in the northeast and north-central portion of Area A (Figure 18). In the first season, our initial exploratory excavations were made on the sides of the short bulldozer trench that had been cut into the masonry pueblo in the early 1970s; these excavations, designated as Units 1A, 1B, 1C, etc., targeted visible architectural remnants Units 1A and 1B on the east side and the others on the west side. Ultimately, Unit 1A was contiguous on the east side with Unit 32; and Unit 1C expanded to include 1D and 1E. In later seasons, Units 34 and 36 were excavated in the same area (in Figure 18, no unit subdivisions are shown).

For the most part, Unit 1 sampled masonry pueblo architecture of Terminal Classic age; but it also sampled earlier pit houses and related deposits and may have encountered some poorly preserved Classic architecture as well. Because we focused on the later architecture, relatively little of the earlier material was investigated; but it is quite clear that there is a great deal of Late Pithouse period, and probably earlier, architecture, features, and deposits throughout the area. Typically, pit houses were dug 30–50 cm into bedrock, ultimately filled and covered by a meter or more of debris. Subsequently, Terminal Classic and possibly Classic construction disturbed the earlier deposits, particularly the digging of deep, wide footing trenches and grave pits.

Generally speaking, much of the Unit 1 area had been extensively disturbed by pothunting prior to our excavations. Indeed, a substantial effort involved wall trenching in deposits long since dug by pothunters. As a result, we encountered relatively little in the way of undisturbed deposits other than architectural remnants and midden deposits beneath some of the surface rooms.

The Terminal Classic and possible Classic remains are described in Chapter 7; the earlier remains are described in Chapter 5. In general, the Terminal Classic room block in the Unit 1 area is believed to have begun as a group of contiguous room suites on the eastern side of Unit 1. A modest portion was completely removed by bulldozing in the 1970s. A notably different group of rooms was added to the west side of the earlier room block sometime during the Terminal Classic. These are significantly larger than the earlier rooms and appear to have been largely, if not fully, interconnected by doors. In addition, at least two of the larger rooms had exterior doorways apparently opening onto a courtyard. As described in Chapters 4 and 7, one and perhaps two of these rooms had veneers on interior walls; and at least part of the long exterior north wall had a veneer as well.

### Unit 2 (Area A)

In 1989, minor excavations were conducted in a broad, shallow depression on the east side of Area A to test for the existence of a large pit structure (Figures 19 and 20). This depression is approximately 14–15 m across and has a distinctive rim, particularly on the eastern side, of cobble-sized tuff rocks. There is even a break in this rim on the east side that led us to suspect an entryway. However, a 1-by-2-m test pit and a short backhoe trench failed to reveal any evidence of architecture and, in fact, revealed only

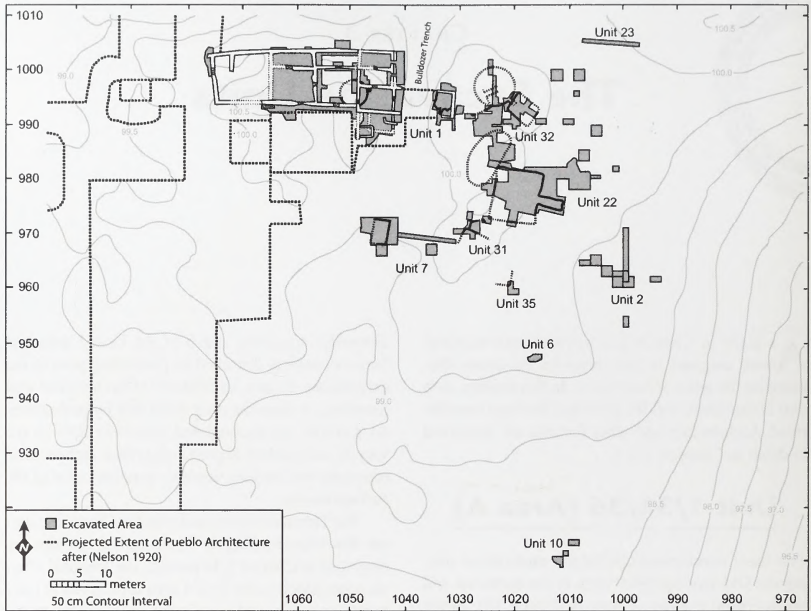


Figure 18. Map of Area A showing location of excavation units.

bedrock at a very shallow depth below surface. As a result, no further work was done in this area until we recognized that the large depression was adjacent to the end of the prehistoric road. In addition, the 1996 season showed the presence of large communal pit structure, A16, nearby and possibly fronting the road. Our interest in Unit 2 was also renewed by the findings since 1989 of several pit structures with floors consisting only of bedrock, not prepared adobe. In addition, the location of this large depression adjacent to the prehistoric road led us to suspect a possible association. Thus, with the objective of testing the inference made in 1989 that this depression did not represent any kind of architecture, we returned to Unit 2 in 1997.

Four 1-by-2-m pits and four 2-by-2-m squares, one of the latter incorporating half of the 1-by-2-m pit dug in 1989, were excavated and are shown in Figure 20. The 10–20-cm-deep rocky fill was removed as a single level, and all fill was passed through ¼-inch screen. Most of the excavation was in the central portion of the large depression, but there were also

test pits in the rim of the depression. One of the 2-by-2-m squares included a very large, prominent boulder on the surface (see Figure 19). This boulder was clearly out of place and appeared to have been braced in its position by smaller rocks that were not visible prior to excavation. We could discern no reason, however, for the presence of the large boulder.

No features or evidence of architecture were found in the Unit 2 excavations in 1997. Compared to what we observed in other pit structures, the bedrock seemed too uneven to have been a floor, even one much disturbed by centuries of weathering and burrowing by badgers and rodents. Similarly, it seems unlikely that an adobe floor, even one so shallow, would have been completely weathered away. Consequently, we have no explanation for this depression. It is notable, however, that artifacts were relatively common in the fill here, particularly certain kinds of objects. Given the modest volume of fill excavated, it contained a seemingly large number of shell bracelet fragments, ground stone,





Figure 19. Unit 2, prior to testing in 1989, view east. Large rock is in central portion of depression.

and unusual objects, such as stone bowls/mortars and cylinders. As discussed in Chapter 6, because of these occurrences, it remains possible that this depression was the location of a large structure with a slightly subterranean floor and that we failed to recognize evidence to that effect.

### **Units 3 and 33 (Area D)**

Located in Area D below the cliff on the west side of Area A, Units 3 and 33 each consist of a 1-by-2-m test pit near one another and several backhoe trenches (Figure 21; see Figure 13). One of the trenches was with the two test pits at the base of the cliff, and the others were placed in a line out into the floodplain. The first test pit was placed adjacent to the first backhoe trench in order to obtain a systematic collection of the stratified deposits evident in the walls of the backhoe trench. Cultural material was present as deep as we could dig (ca. 1.5 m) and appeared to continue in the saturated deposits below the water table (Figures 22 and 23; Table 7). Based on ceramics, the earliest sampled deposits are probably early in the Late Pithouse period or perhaps somewhat earlier (Table 8).

The excavation of the first test pit (Unit 3) was by arbitrary levels but separated by stratigraphic zones (Figure 24). The second test pit (Unit 33) was excavated only by stratigraphic zones and was dug specifically to enlarge the sample of faunal remains. Unfortunately, there were considerably fewer faunal remains in the second test pit, even using  $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch mesh screen, than in the first.

The series of short backhoe trenches away from the cliff was dug in an effort to see if any prehistoric irrigation ditches might be present. No ditch or other feature was observed in any of these trenches, but it is possible that ditches are nonetheless present and were simply missed by the short trenches.

### **Unit 4 (Area B)**

Unit 4 is an excavation in a low, rocky mound in Area B first suspected of being the remnant of a post-Classic adobe structure (see Figure 24). It soon became evident that the mound instead was the collapsed construction material of a masonry-walled pit house, Room B2, built during the Three Circle phase sometime around A.D. 900. During the 1989 season, most of the entryway and approximately half

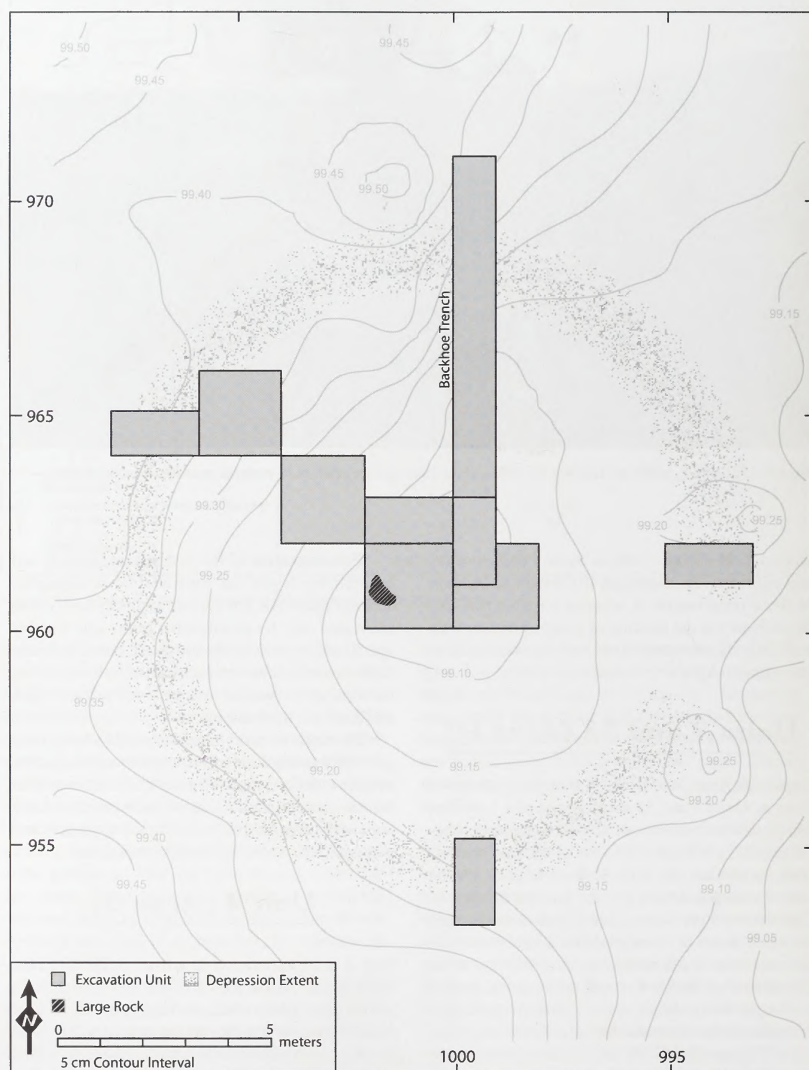


Figure 20. Surface contour map and plan of Unit 2 excavations.



Figure 21. Excavating Unit 3 backhoe trench at base of cliff in 1989.



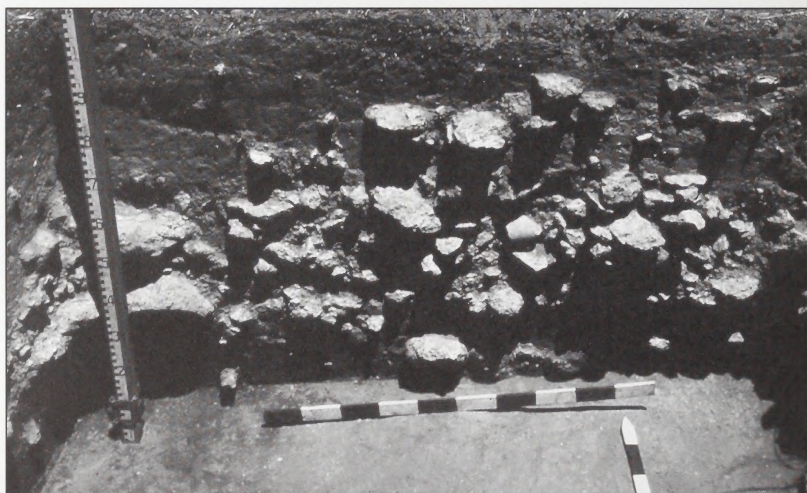
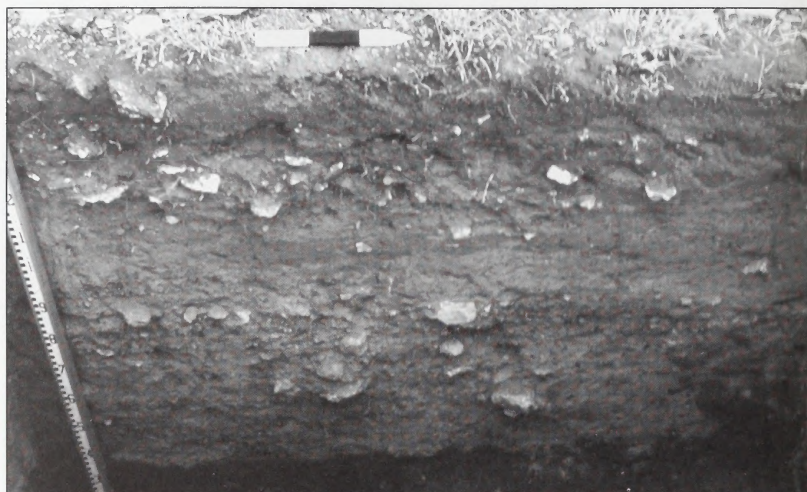


Figure 22. North profile of Unit 3 (metric stadia rod at left and 30 cm arrow at top) (*top*) and north profile of Unit 33 (metric stadia rod at left and meter scale at bottom) (*bottom*).



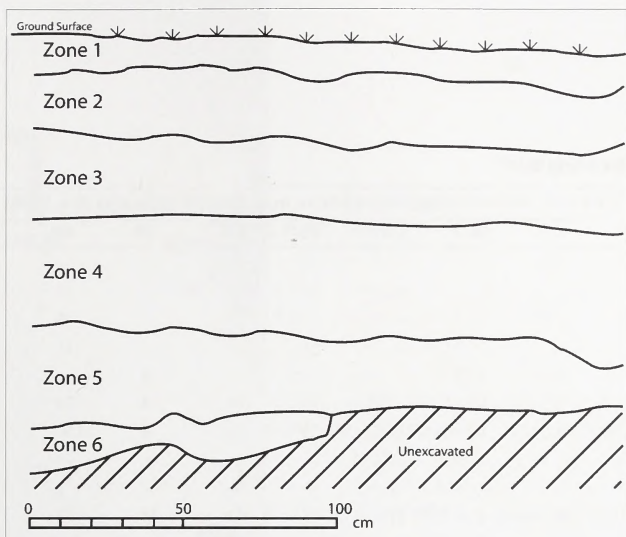


Figure 23. Profile of north wall of Unit 3 with stratigraphic zones described in Table 7.

**Table 7. Stratigraphic Zones in Test Pits 1 and 2**

Zone	Description
1	loose, grayish brown silt with scattered small pebbles; many grass roots; heavily bioturbated; cultural material throughout, with Classic period ceramics
2	grayish brown silt with cobbles of tuff; roots throughout; fairly distinct contact with overlying Zone 1; cultural material throughout, with Classic period and earlier ceramics
3	compact, grayish tan silt with occasional pebbles and cobbles of tuff; roots and cultural material throughout, with Classic period and earlier ceramics; fairly distinct contacts with Zones 2 and 4, above and below
4	grayish brown silt with abundant pebbles and large cobbles of tuff; appears to have more clay than overlying zones; roots throughout; distinct contacts with Zones 3 and 5; abundant cultural material with Classic period ceramics in upper portion, Three Circle phase ceramics below
5	grayish brown, coarse sand with rounded pea-sized gravel and pebbles; friable, rounded gravel and sand suggesting waterlain deposition; roots throughout; lower contact with underlying Zone 6 is marked by a thin layer of fine sand, with an obvious lithologic change to sticky clay; constantly wet due to being near top of water table; sterile of cultural material
6	dark brown or gray silty clays; large cobbles of tuff in upper 10–15 cm, smaller tuff cobbles throughout; roots throughout; saturated; clays are generally dark brown (wet) with gray layers and mottled areas; clays are very sticky and difficult to screen; cultural material present throughout excavated portion but most abundant in upper 15 cm; ceramics are early Three Circle phase in upper portion; small sample of only plain pottery in lowest portion

Table 8. Ceramic Types, by Zone and Excavation Level in Test Pits 1 and 2

Pottery Type	Ceramic Artifacts from Test Pit 1 Zones(s) (n = 981)										Ceramic Artifacts from Test Pit 2 Zone(s) (n = 1,145)										
	1 and 2	2	3 and 4	3 and 4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5 and 6	6	1	2A	2B	2C	3A	3B	4A	4B	4C
Level	1	2	3	4	5	6A	6B	7A	7B	8	9	10									
Three Circle R/W	—	1	1 (1)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1 (3)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mimbres B/W, Style I	—	—	1 (1)	—	—	1 (2)	—	3 (9)	1 (20)	—	1 (3)	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	6	1	—
Mimbres B/W, Style II	—	—	—	—	21 (6)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	11	15	—
San Francisco Red	—	—	—	—	6 (2)	4 (8)	—	2 (6)	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	6	—
Three Circle Corrugated	—	2 (1)	2 (2)	6 (8)	55 (16)	8 (16)	3 (7)	2 (6)	—	—	—	—	2	9	5	19	16	4	19	74	5
Plain	10 (16)	35 (16)	36 (36)	33 (45)	187 (53)	24 (49)	32 (65)	24 (71)	2 (40)	—	4 (12)	7 (100)	6	9	18	23	36	8	150	171	42
Punctuated	—	—	—	1 (1)	6 (2)	—	—	—	—	—	25 (76)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6	—
Scored	—	—	—	—	4 (1)	—	—	—	—	—	1 (3)	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	3	—
Style indeterminate	22 (35)	46 (21)	18 (18)	17 (23)	48 (14)	12 (24)	8 (18)	2 (6)	2 (40)	—	—	—	10	8	11	55	73	15	32	35	5
El Paso Brown	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
El Paso Painted	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	—
Mimbres B/W, Style III	14 (22)	47 (21)	14 (14)	6 (8)	11 (3)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7	5	7	22	32	7	8	—	—
Mimbres Poly	1 (1)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Classic corrugated	17 (27)	85 (39)	29 (29)	10 (14)	12 (3)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	20	15	47	34	8	5	1	—
Playas	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other corrugated	—	1	—	—	2	—	—	1 (3)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—
Other	—	1	—	—	1	—	1 (2)	—	—	—	1 (3)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	64	218	101	73	353	49	44	34	5	0	33	7	31	52	57	167	193	43	235	315	52

Note: Percentages are given in parentheses.  
Key: B/W = Black-on-white; R/W = Red-on-white



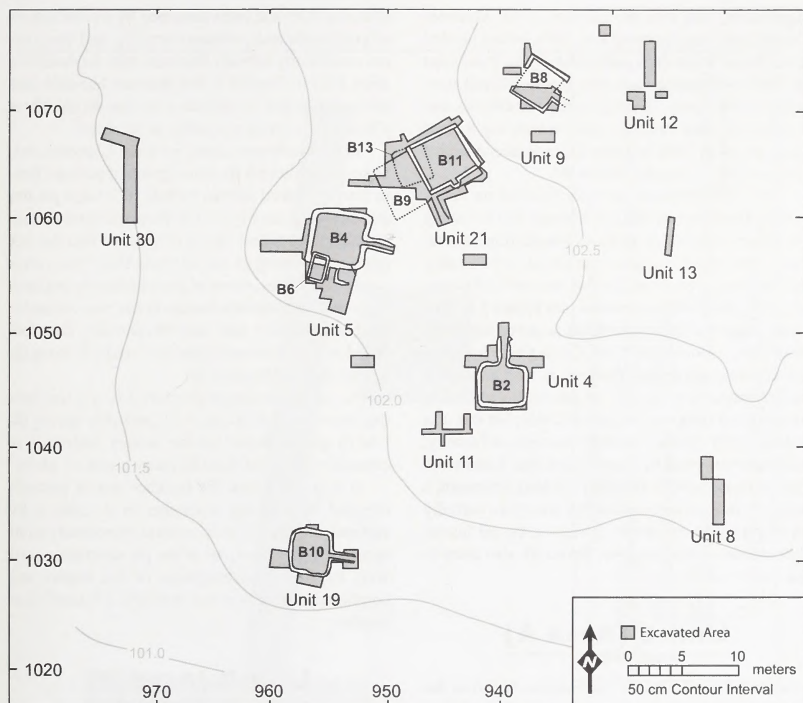


Figure 24. Map of Area B showing excavation units except for Unit 24 to the north.

of the interior of Room B2 was partially excavated, although the task of exposing the floor was left for the 1990 season. The extended, masonry-walled entryway of this pit structure was oriented to the north (see Figure 24). The room had been dug roughly three-quarters of a meter into tuff bedrock, but owing to the accumulation of fallen wall material and perhaps aeolian deposits, the floor was 1 m below modern ground surface. The amount of fallen wall material indicates that the walls above original ground surface had once been full-height masonry walls.

Fill stratigraphy was relatively simple. Above the floor, there was a 5–10-cm-thick deposit of laminated, fine-textured sediment that apparently washed off the walls. Above this was a 10–20-cm-thick zone of roof adobe, much of it burned, and most of the burned roof adobe within about 1 m of the east and west

sides. There was relatively little burned roof fall in the central north-south portion of the room. From the roof fall to modern ground surface, the fill consisted of rock and adobe from the fallen walls. Given the presence of small patches of burned wall plaster lying flat along the walls and at different elevations in the fill, it is inferred that wall collapse and filling of the room was gradual. This fill was comparatively loose and had numerous rodent burrows, but there was no evidence of pothunter disturbance.

## Unit 5 (Area B)

The excavation of Unit 5 (see Figure 24) began in 1990 in an effort to assess another low, rocky mound in Area B much like the one encountered in Unit 4.

Apparently, this was the location of the Mimbres Foundation's test excavation in 1976, which yielded a number of large slabs and boulders like those used in wall construction in nearby Room B2 and elsewhere at Old Town. This suggested to us that this was another masonry structure; and, in fact, our limited excavations in 1990 revealed the presence of such a pit structure, designated Room B4.

The 1991 excavations were focused on determining the nature of this pit structure and assessing the effect of the older Mimbres Foundation excavation. This effort occupied the entire 1991 season and resulted in excavation of an area of ca. 40.6 m<sup>2</sup>, including the 1990 excavations (see Figure 24). As a result, important information was acquired regarding Room B4, a remodeled Three Circle phase masonry pit structure and related features, as well as a small surface masonry room, B6. Originally, Room B4 had an extended entryway on its south side; but this was subsequently closed, possibly because of burning, and a new entryway built on the east side. Ultimately, this pit house burned. Probably not long afterward, a small surface masonry room, B6, was built, partially overlapping the southwest corner of the pit house. As best we could determine, Room B6 also dates to the Three Circle phase.

## **Unit 6 (Area A)**

Late in the 1991 season, excavations began in the southeastern portion of Area A in a location that we believed to have Classic period architectural remains. This area appeared to be less disturbed by pothunting than is typical of Area A (see Figure 18). Our work in Unit 6 was limited to 2 days, enough time to reveal evidence of architecture but nothing more specific.

## **Unit 7 (Area B)**

In 1989, Backhoe Trench 1 was dug in the north-central portion of the low area considered then to be a large plaza in the Classic Mimbres pueblo in Area A. Several features were found, but no additional excavation was done until 1992 when slightly over 36 m<sup>2</sup> (including part of the backhoe trench) were excavated to bedrock, all but 4 m<sup>2</sup> in one block (Figure 25; see Figure 18).

As a result of work in this unit, one rectangular pit structure, Room A10, was partially excavated, as was some adjacent extramural area. Unfortunately, most

of Room A10 had been disturbed by a combination of prehistoric and pothunter activity, and we could not confidently identify the west side. As described more fully in Chapter 4, this structure has pole-and-adobe walls and is presumed to date to the Three Circle phase, based primarily on its shape.

In the northwest corner of Unit 7, immediately adjacent to Room A10, was a group of perhaps three to four disturbed human burials in a large pit dug into bedrock (see Figure 25). No articulated skeletal remains were found, but it is believed that the 100 percent screening of the fill from Unit 7 recovered most of the bones, many of them broken by pothunting. Another disturbed human burial was located in a pit immediately east, and the partially disturbed burial of an infant was found in a small pit along the east pit edge of Room A10.

An adobe-mixing pit (Feature A10-12) had been dug into the fill of Room A10, probably during the Classic period, based on the meager collection of ceramics recovered from its many layers of adobe.

It is possible that the backhoe trench partially exposed the entryway to another pit structure in the east end. The 2-by-2-m excavation immediately south apparently was over part of the pit structure's north wall. No further investigation of this feature was conducted, and it was not assigned a feature/room number.

## **Unit 8 (Area A)**

The objective of the Unit 8 excavations was to determine if the magnetic anomalies in that location represented a cultural feature, as it was thought that a pit structure or other feature might possibly be present. This possibility was indicated in no small part by the presence of a human phalange and a few, small, very poorly preserved bone fragments on the surface.

Excavations to evaluate this possibility consisted of three 1-by-2-m units, two forming a 4-m-long north-south trench that included the location at which the human bone had been found (see Figure 24). The third was offset 1 m to the west. These units were dug in arbitrary levels, and all fill was passed through ¼-inch screen. In each, bedrock was encountered at a depth of ca. 25–30 cm, and no cultural features were recognized. Ceramic and lithic artifacts were present throughout in modest quantities, although they were more frequent in the upper 20 cm. Because no human skeletal remains were recovered during the excavations, the source of the bones found on the



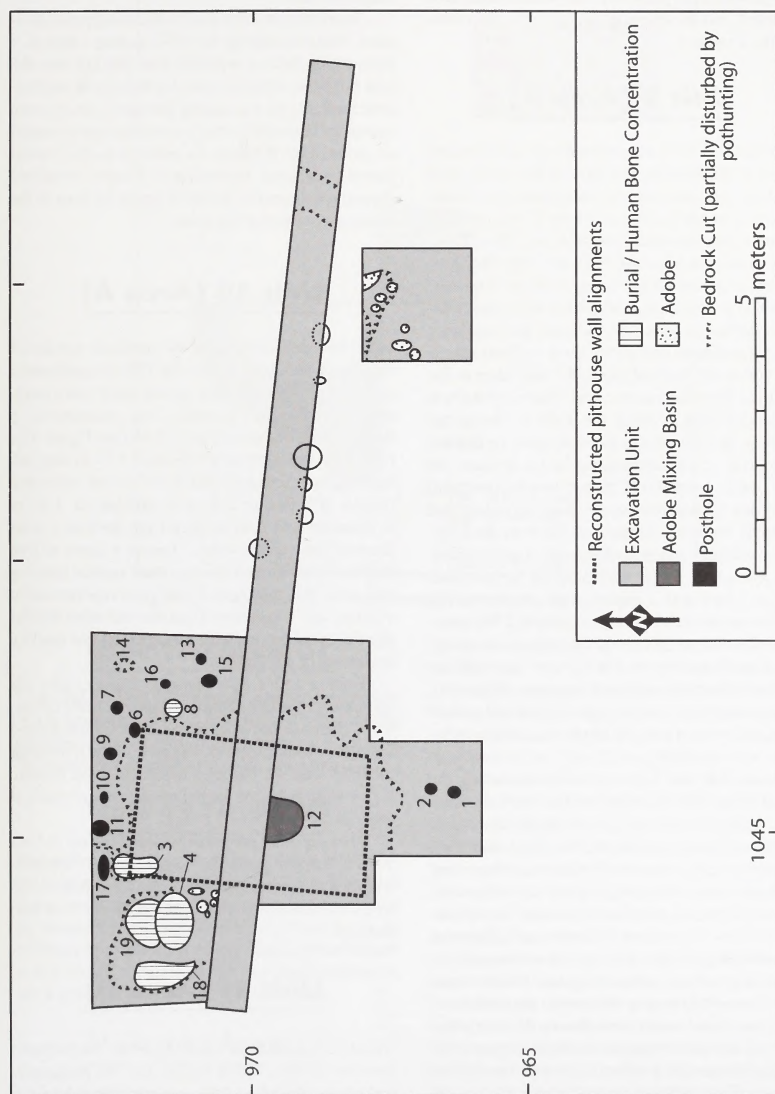


Figure 25. Plan of Unit 7 excavations and features.

surface during the magnetometer survey is unknown. Clearly, there is no pit of any size present in the area excavated, and the source of the magnetic anomalies remains a mystery.

## **Unit 9 (Area B)**

Unit 9 was laid out to determine if a pit structure was present in the location of a low, rocky rise in Area B that was not magnetically anomalous (see Figure 24). Unit 9 began in 1993 as a 1-by-2-m excavation that lay across the south wall of Room B8, a Three Circle phase masonry-walled pit structure. Once the presence of Room B8 was recognized, our course of action was to determine, with as little effort and minimal disturbance as possible, the basic characteristics of the pit structure. That part of the 1-by-2-m excavations within the walls of Room B8 was taken to the floor in a controlled manner, and a series of shallow trenches was dug to define the walls and locate the entryway. In each trench, the wall could be defined at the level of the surrounding bedrock where, in many places, burned wall plaster was encountered. The trench fill was removed without screening and ultimately replaced, whereas all fill from the 1-by-2-m excavations was passed through ¼-inch screen.

Fortunately, these very limited excavations revealed a great deal of important information on this pit structure and left it mostly undisturbed. We determined that Room B8 is a nearly square, masonry-walled pit structure, ca. 3.4 m on a side, with an entryway extending to the southeast (see Figure 24). Its floor is approximately 1 m below present ground surface and was at least 80 cm below surface at the time it was inhabited.

Room B8 was excavated further during the 1994 season. By the close of the 1994 excavations, approximately 42 percent of the floor area had been cleared (see Figure 24). The objectives of further excavation were to recover architectural wood specimens that might yield tree-ring dates and to increase our sample of material culture so as to more fully understand the nature and context of the assemblage. There was also reason to question the accuracy of the archaeomagnetic date obtained in 1993, and because a substantial proportion of the architectural wood from Room B8 was piñon pine, we elected to excavate the southern portion of the pit structure in an effort to recover the desired samples. This decision proved sound, for we did recover structural wood specimens that yielded

tree-ring dates contradicting the original archaeomagnetic date.

Excavation in 1994 was by the stratigraphic divisions observed during the 1993 testing—that is, a layer of fill above a wall-fall zone that lay over the roof fall zone, which, in turn, lay directly on the bedrock floor. All fill was passed through ¼-inch screen except for feature fill, which was either fine-screened or retained for flotation. In addition to the typical rodent disturbance, burrowing by a larger animal had extensively disturbed the fill down to the floor in the southeast portion of the room.

## **Unit 10 (Area A)**

In the flat area southeast of the southeast portion of the Classic Mimbres pueblo, the 1993 magnetometer recorded several anomalies, one of which was a large, pronounced, dipole anomaly. Test excavations in this location, designated as Unit 10 (see Figure 18), revealed a well-defined pit (Feature A13-1) dug into bedrock; approximately half of this pit was excavated (Figure 26). Feature A13-1 is circular, ca. 1.45 m in diameter and 0.40 m deep (into bedrock), with more or less vertical sides. There is a series of five shallow holes around the top; their regular spacing suggested that they were related to a superstructure of some sort. It is believed that this and other similar pits dug into bedrock were storage facilities used by occupants of pit houses.

Feature A13-1 fill consisted of loose, ashy silt containing modest quantities of sherds, lithic debris, wood charcoal, and other material. All fill was passed through ¼-inch screen, as was most of the remaining fill from Unit 10. Samples of the fill from Feature A13-1 were collected for pollen and macrobotanical analysis.

The only other potentially cultural feature in Unit 10 is a possible posthole, Feature A13-2, approximately 3 m northeast of Feature A13-1. It is ca. 23 by 30 cm and had been dug some 23 cm deep into bedrock.

## **Unit 11 (Area B)**

Unit 11 is a small, hand-excavated test of a magnetic anomaly in Area B (see Figure 24). No prehistoric feature was found, and the nature of the anomaly is unknown.

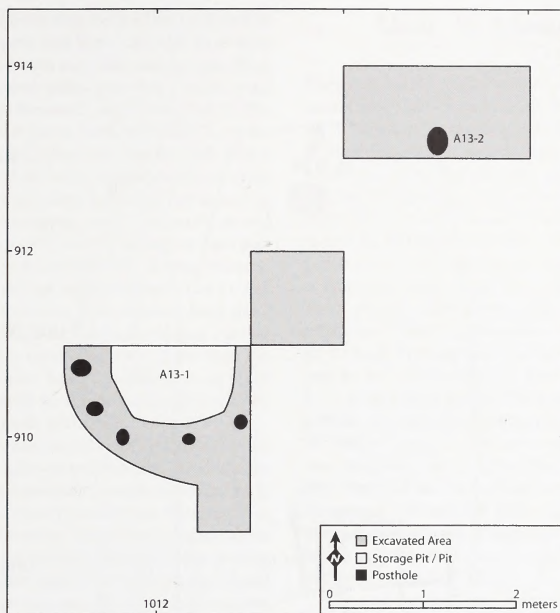


Figure 26. Plan of Unit 10 excavations and features.

## Unit 12 (Area B)

Like Unit 11, Unit 12 is a small, hand-excavated test of a magnetic anomaly in Area B (see Figure 24). No prehistoric feature was found in this unit either, and the nature of this anomaly is also unknown.

## Unit 13 (Area B)

Unit 13 is a short trench dug into a low rise in the eastern portion of Area B (see Figure 24). It was speculated that this rise might also represent a masonry-walled pit structure like those elsewhere in Area B, but no evidence of architecture or any other cultural feature was found. The nature of this low rise is unknown, but it does not appear to be archaeological.

## Unit 14 (Area C)

Unit 14 represents one of the two largest excavations conducted in Area C (Figure 27); investigations

focused on exploring apparent Black Mountain phase architectural remains disturbed by pothunting. The two contiguous surface rooms that were exposed, Rooms C1 and C2, appear to form the eastern edge of the plaza and overlie various features tentatively attributed to the Late Pithouse Period.

Our excavations revealed that pothunters had destroyed approximately half of Room C1 but had done relatively little damage to Room C2, although the entire length of C2's west wall and its southeast and northeast corners had been subject to digging. Room C1 is a nearly square room with a floor area of 10.2 m<sup>2</sup>, and at 13.5 m<sup>2</sup>, and Room C2 is almost one-third larger than Room C1.

Based on wall abutments, it is clear that Room C2 was added to Room C1. An apparent wall extending west from the southwest corner of Room C1 suggests that there was another room southwest, if not also south of it. Wall segments along the alignment of the east and west walls of Rooms C1 and C2, but several meters to the south, further suggest that there was a room adjacent to C1 on its south side.



# EXCAVATIONS AT THE OLD TOWN RUIN

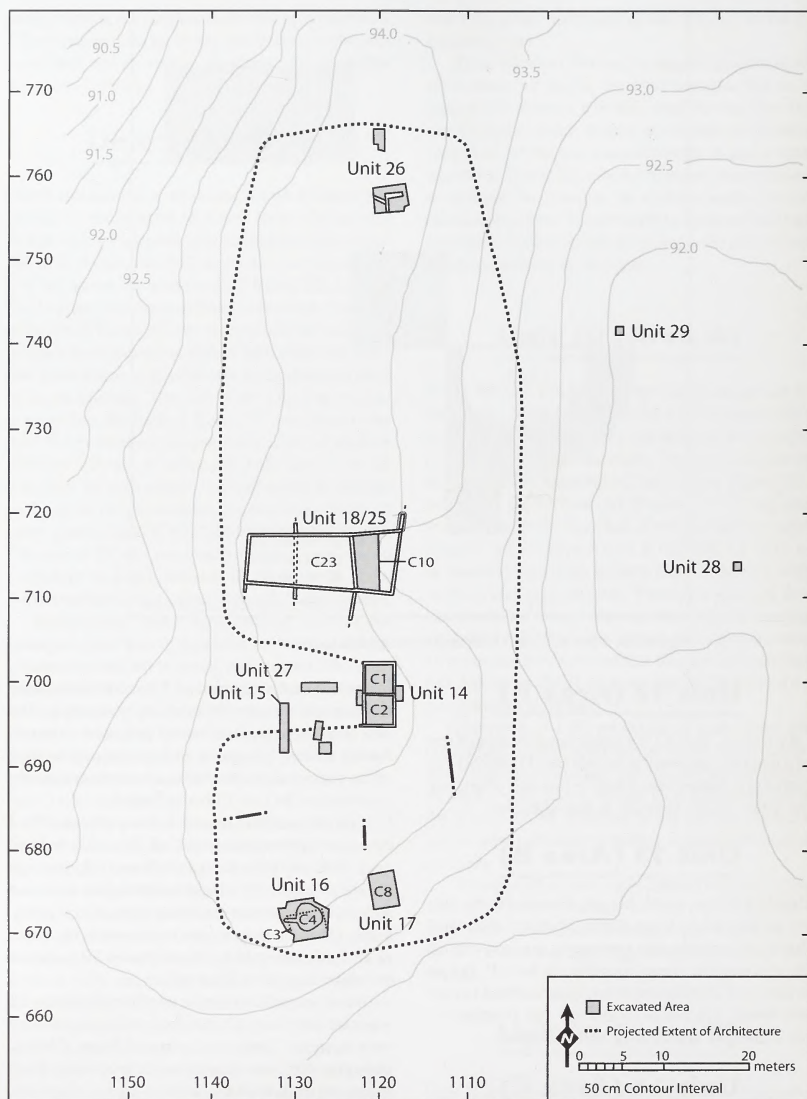


Figure 27. Map of Area C showing excavation units.

The presence of numerous rocks of the kind used in these walls suggests that there may well have been adjacent rooms on the east side; and, in fact, there is at least one known wall segment on a north-south alignment east of Rooms C1 and C2 (see Figure 27). Similarly, a wall segment north of Room C2, on the same alignment as its east wall, may be evidence for adjacent rooms to the north, although no indication of walls was found during excavation that consisted of very shallow scraping around the northeast and northwest corners of Room C2 (an area at least partially disturbed by pothunting). It does seem unlikely, however, that there are rooms west of C1 and C2 in the area believed to be a plaza because tests there found no recognized architectural remains but did find bedrock at a much shallower depth than the room floors. In sum, there is evidence, but no proof at present, that there were rooms adjacent to C1 and C2 on the east, north, and south.

There are several features underlying Rooms C1 and C2 that are believed to date to the Late Pithouse Period, although some could possibly date to the Early Pithouse Period. The largest of these, Feature C9, is probably a pit structure. Very little is known about this feature, but its western edge clearly lies directly underneath the east walls of surface Rooms C1 and C2. Its north edge was partially exposed in a narrow trench adjacent to C1 and C2. Because we chose not to disturb this feature, we were unable to determine the shape of the pit structure with any certainty. Our impression, however, is that it is rectangular. No unambiguous evidence of its age was recovered aside from Three Circle phase ceramics in the fill.

Underlying Room C2 are six features tentatively considered to be Three Circle phase in age. One (Feature C2-25) is a probable posthole, four are small pits (Features C2-6, C2-13, C2-14, and C2-31), and one (Feature C2-32) is a large, circular pit like those found in Units 10 and 16 (see Chapter 5). Feature C2-13 is a shallow, adobe-lined, basin-shaped pit containing a few burned rocks. It and perhaps one or two similar pits (vaguely hinted at) had been dug into the fill of the large pit, Feature C2-32. Feature C2-6 is similar in all respects to C2-13 but is outside of the large pit.

The superpositioning of these features indicates that this area saw considerable use prior to occupation in the Black Mountain phase, or at least prior to construction of Room C2. At present, we know very little about this earlier use, but the array of features and their relationships are very similar to those in Unit 16.

## **Unit 15 (Area C)**

Excavated in 1993, Unit 15 consists of three 1-by-2-m excavations laid out north-south, ultimately forming a 6-m-long trench extending from the apparent plaza in Area C south into what is believed to be an area of surface rooms. Our objective was to determine if this was in fact a plaza with rooms to the south (see Figure 27). Unit 15 was one of the first excavations in Area C, and we suspect that there may have been architectural remnants that we failed to recognize at that early stage of our work in this part of Old Town. As we eventually learned, many of the wall remnants in Area C consist only of footings and can be difficult to recognize in small exposures. This may be the case in Unit 15, where there may have been an east-west wall on the same alignment that extends west from the southwest corner of Room C1. We did not, however, find any prepared surface that was recognized as an adobe floor, so the presence of a room in this area remains unconfirmed. Given the presence of apparent wall segments exposed at the surface nearby, we nonetheless consider it to be highly probable that there is a room in all but the north end of the Unit 15 area.

No cultural features were recognized in this trench. Bedrock was generally encountered ca. 20–30 cm below surface, but there are numerous irregular holes in the bedrock that appear to have been animal burrows. Bedrock is present at a comparatively shallow depth below, especially in the north end, believed to have been an open plaza.

In the 2003 season, we excavated a shorter test trench and a 1-m<sup>2</sup> area just east of the trench dug in 1993 to test magnetic anomalies identified during a magnetometer survey. The trench was parallel to the one dug in 1993; but, as was the case with the earlier trench, no definite wall remnant could be identified. In the square just to the south, however, what appeared to be an adobe floor with a possible posthole was encountered some 15 cm below surface. Further excavations are necessary to determine what, if any, architectural remnants are present in this part of Area C.

## **Unit 16 (Area C)**

A small pothole and several large rhyolite rocks lying adjacent to one another suggested that surface architecture was present in this part of Area C, and

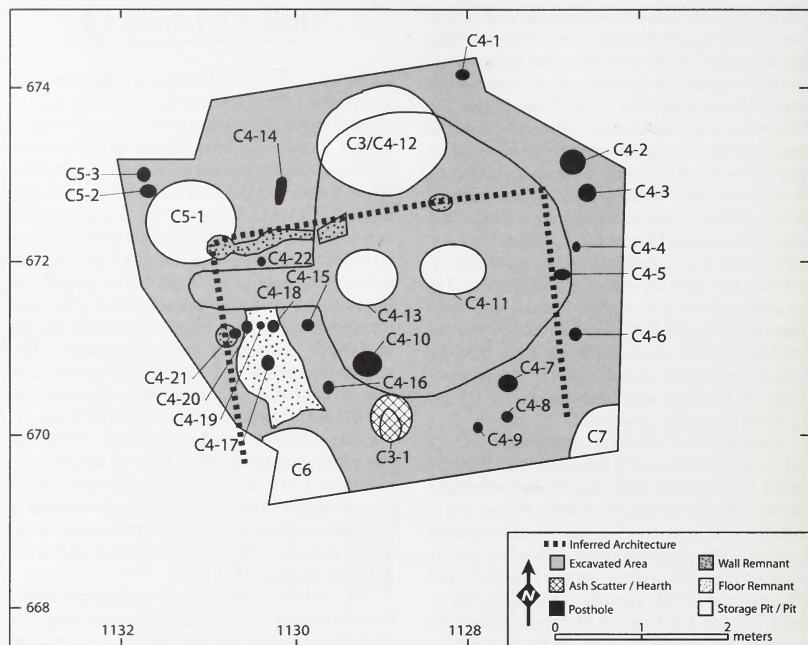


Figure 28. Plan of Unit 16 excavations and features.

Unit 16 was excavated in an effort to determine the nature of the remains that had been disturbed by relic collectors (see Figure 27). Unit 16 is an irregularly shaped excavation of ca. 18 m<sup>2</sup>. Excavation was decidedly frustrating because the extent of pothunter disturbance was far greater than indicated by the surface evidence. Nonetheless, we were able to determine that a D-shaped pit structure, Room C4, and four large extramural pits underlay at least one almost totally destroyed surface room, C3 (Figure 28). The destruction of these remains is primarily a result of looting, but erosion may well have caused some damage on the south side.

Room C3 is a very poorly preserved surface room. Most of the damage can be clearly attributed to pothunting, but erosion and weathering probably contributed as well. Remnants include portions of the adobe wall base for the north wall, a small area of floor and probable wall base on top of bedrock on the west side, and a small portion of a basin-shaped adobe hearth (Feature C3-1). The destruction is so thorough

that room dimensions cannot be ascertained with any confidence, although the location of the hearth relative to the wall and floor remnants suggests that the room is at least 3 m north-south and east-west. No evidence of adjoining rooms was found to the north or east; but, given the extent of disturbance, if once present, they could possibly have been destroyed or perhaps were not recognized.

As is implied by extent of the disturbance in Unit 16 described above, we were able to collect very few objects that can be directly related to Room C3. For all practical purposes, there is no assemblage that is useful for establishing any context other than a tentative association with this surface room. Several fragments of human bone were recovered from the disturbed fill of underlying pit structure Room C4, and although these could plausibly relate to Room C3, they could as easily date much earlier.

Room C4 was a D-shaped pit structure with an extended entryway that opened to the west (see Figures 27 and 28). The structure is 3 m east-west



(exclusive of entryway) and 3.75 m north-south; the entryway is 1.5 m long and ca. 0.5 m wide. On the basis of its shape, Room C4 is considered to date early in the Late Pithouse period.

The fill in Room C4 is a rather uniform, loose, silty deposit containing occasional rocks and relatively few artifacts. Rodent burrowing is extensive. Even where disturbed by pothunting (which characterizes most of the room), the fill is very homogeneous, with no recognized layering or stratification. So far as could be determined, the only fill potentially undisturbed by pothunting is north of the north wall of overlying Room C3. There is, however, a reasonable possibility that even some of this fill has been disturbed by pothunting, particularly where there is a break in the C3 wall base.

The pit structure fill in the northwest portion and in a 1-m<sup>2</sup> control unit on the north edge was fully screened through ¼-inch mesh, but none of the disturbed fill was screened except for that surrounding a small cluster of human bone fragments. This latter fill was passed through window screen to check for beads and other small objects. As it turned out, the 1-m<sup>2</sup> control unit sampled presumably undisturbed pit house fill as well as the fill belonging to later, superimposed pit C4-12 (see below). It is not, therefore, a particularly meaningful sample. There was no evidence that Room C4 burned, so we presume that it was simply abandoned and allowed to decay. Much of the fill may well have been windblown or deposited as slopewash and was extensively bioturbated.

Evidently, sometime after abandonment, Feature C4-12 was dug into the north side of the structure (see Figure 28). C4-12 is a large, oval pit dug down a few centimeters deeper than the floor of Room C4; its excavation removed the lower bedrock cut on Room C4's north side. The age of Feature C4-12 is unknown, but it probably dates to when Room C4 was filled, offering a suitable place to locate a large pit. Similarly, Feature C5-1, a large, circular pit ca. 1 m in diameter, was dug immediately adjacent to the entryway of Room C4; its proximity suggests that it, too, is of different age. However, there was no structural or stratigraphic indication of the relative ages of C5-1 and Room C4. It is clear, though, that Feature C5-1 predates surface Room C3 because the north wall of C3 overlay C5-1 and, intruded into its fill somewhat. This stratigraphic situation matches that of similar features in Unit 14.

Two additional features, C6 and C7, were found in Unit 16 but not further investigated. These are large pits dug into bedrock, and neither was inves-

tigated beyond partial exposure at bedrock level. These investigations obtained preliminary approximations of horizontal and vertical extent, the latter by probing.

## Unit 17 (Area C)

Unit 17 is a minor excavation in Area C dug to investigate remains disturbed by a pothunter (see Figure 27). Lying around a pothole are several probable wall rocks, and, just to the south, there is a small rhyolite slab barely exposed at the surface but obviously sitting vertically. These suggested the presence of a structure, but we were only able to confirm the presence of a Black Mountain phase surface room, designated Room C8. The only excavation, other than removing some of the pothole fill, was minor trenching along the south wall. This revealed that the adobe floor of Room C8 is only 10–15 cm below surface on the south side but probably somewhat deeper upslope on the north side. The south wall remnant, including the vertical rhyolite slab, is similarly only about 15 cm high.

Removal of the loose upper few centimeters of fill where other walls were suspected revealed alignments of rocks that appear to mark the general location of the north, east, and west walls (see description in Chapter 8). The best defined of these is the north wall, but with this limited exposure, we were not able to distinguish the wall base from wall fall. The west wall is poorly defined, primarily because it has been extensively disturbed by pothunting, but locating the southwest corner allowed us to determine the wall alignment. Although no effort was made to determine if there are any adjacent rooms, similar wall alignments nearby suggest that there may be, at least on the north and west sides, if not on the east and south as well.

Based on these exposures, the dimensions of Room C8 can be approximated at ca. 3.5–4 m north-south and perhaps 3 m east-west. The alignment shown in Figure 27 is also approximate and more nearly resembles the wall alignment inferred for Room C3 in Unit 16 than those of Rooms C1 and C2 or the wall segments south and southeast of Unit 14. Perhaps some of the rooms in the southern portion of Area C represent construction of different age than those to the north.

Although part of Room C8 has been disturbed, a substantial portion may well remain intact and probably merits further excavation. Room C8, in short,

is considered to be a Black Mountain phase room, probably near the south side of the pueblo. It is clear even from our limited subfloor penetration that this room was built, at least in part, over fill 30 cm deep or more, but neither the context nor age of this fill is known. It seems reasonable to hypothesize that Room C8 was built over a filled pit structure or partly over fill brought in to level the area for construction.

## **Unit 18/25 (Area C)**

One of our principal objectives in Area C was to investigate the relationship between wall segments exposed east of the rubble mound and the Black Mountain phase architecture represented by the much disturbed rubble mound (see Figure 27). More specifically, we sought information on the temporal relationship of these surface rooms because our inspection in 1993 led us to believe that there was an east-west wall alignment perhaps representing one long, continuous wall. As a result of relatively minor excavations during different seasons, we partially exposed Room C10 and acquired information on adjacent Room C23, both of which shared this continuous wall on their north sides.

Room C10 was first identified in 1993 by its northeast corner exposed in a pothole. Clearing of the walls revealed that Room C10 is quite large and asymmetrical. It is ca. 7 m north-south, 4.1 m east-west on the south side, and 5.8 m east-west on the north side, with a floor area of approximately 35 m<sup>2</sup> (see Chapter 8 for a detailed description). Room C10 is very poorly preserved, and for the most part, only the wall bases in the footing trenches remain, just below modern ground surface. No floor could be confidently identified. Given the poor preservation and limited time, we elected to excavate only the western portion (ca. 56 percent), anticipating earlier remains below that would require additional time to investigate.

As noted previously, both the north and south walls are continuous west of C10 all the way through the low rubble mound. The east wall of C10 abuts the north wall, but the southeast corner is too poorly preserved to determine if it is bonded or abutted. The west wall clearly abuts both the north and south walls, indicating that Room C10 and adjacent Room C23 were built at the same time. No doorways were recognized in any wall remnant, though only footings remain in most sections of the walls. In 2003, minor clearing of overburden to verify a slight mag-

netic difference revealed that the east wall alignment continues north of the northeast corner, although pothunter disturbance prohibited us from determining if that corner is bonded or abutted. Regardless, there appears to have been another room immediately north of C10.

The type of wall construction and ceramics indicate that Room C10 dates to the Black Mountain phase, but there are no data that allow us to date it more precisely. Clearly, Rooms C10 and C23 are contemporaneous, but the quantity of large wall rocks composing the rubble mound over Room C23 and adjacent rooms to its south, west, and north suggests that at least partial masonry walls—apparently quite different from the walls of Room C10—are present. Whether this difference was original or perhaps reflects removal and recycling of the rock is unknown.

As expected, there are numerous features under Room C10, most of them tentatively attributed to Pithouse period occupation of Area C (see Chapters 5 and 10 for details). These include several postholes and larger pits. Among the more interesting are two large pits (Features C19 and C20), each with surrounding rings of postholes (see discussion in Chapter 5). The other features below Room C10 were assigned the feature number C21 and include postholes and larger pits. Some of the postholes may well relate to Room C21, especially those lining up along the long axis of the room. Feature C21-1 is a pit with an inverted slab metate lying on the bottom; the metate, in turn, has other rocks and adobe above it. Feature C21-12 is a somewhat smaller pit, which contained a very poorly preserved, possibly human infant cranium; a bone bead; and a lump of red pigment.

## **Unit 19 (Area B)**

In the southern part of Area B, there is a low but obvious rocky rise that we suspected to be the remnants of a masonry-walled pit house similar to those previously investigated in Units 4, 5, and 9. Testing on the north side in 1994 revealed that this inference was correct, and in 1996, the remainder was excavated (see Figure 24). A narrow trench along the inside of the south wall located *in situ* burned wall plaster and also indicated that the fill consisted entirely of fallen construction debris. Given the fact that no means of entry had yet been identified and that the fill appeared to be homogeneous construction material



for which we already had a controlled sample, we elected to excavate the remainder of Room B10 in an expeditious manner. Basically, this involved removing without screening all fill down to a point about 5 or so cm above roof fall. Thus, in addition to the controlled samples from the 1994 excavation and the 1996 excavation along the south wall, we have complete ¼-inch screen collection of the lower 5 cm of wall fall and all roof fall. There was no fill between roof fall and floor.

Room B10 is a square masonry-walled pit house with an extended entryway on the east side. The structure has a floor area of approximately 9.95 m<sup>2</sup> (ca. 3.15 m on each side). Its construction involved digging a pit into bedrock, some 70 cm deep on the north side and ca. 30 cm deep on the south side. The walls were built directly on top of the bedrock cut, resulting in continuous walls from floor to roof. As is the case with most of the other pit structures in Area B, the walls of Room B10 were built of tuff slabs, cobbles, and boulders set in large amounts of adobe and are about 25 cm thick.

## Unit 20/21 (Area B)

Small test excavations (individually designated Units 20 and 21) where adjacent auger holes indicated sharp differences in bedrock elevation ultimately were expanded to one contiguous excavation herein referred to as Unit 21 (see Figure 24). As a result of these excavations, all or parts of three pit structures were exposed (Figure 29). In stratigraphic order from earliest to latest, these were Rooms B13, B9, and B11.

An angular cut in bedrock is considered to be the rounded corner of a square or rectangular pit structure designated Room B13. Little is known about Room B13 because construction of Room B9 destroyed most of it. Its size, shape, and the location of the presumed entryway are all unknown, although it is apparent that the entryway was not on the north side. No floor features could be associated with Room B13. Similarly, there were no remnants or other evidence of walls above bedrock, so the method of wall construction is unknown. Only a very small sample of artifacts was recovered from the modest amount of fill between the wall of B9 and the bedrock wall segments of B13. Its age is uncertain, although its shape indicates a Three Circle phase assignment. Since overlying Room B9 evidently dates to the late A.D. 800s, Room B13 probably dates earlier but still in the A.D. 800s.

One of the most surprising and remarkable structures yet found at Old Town, Room B9 has a decidedly non-Mimbres, even non-Mogollon, appearance. It was not completely excavated, but enough was exposed to determine its size, shape, method of construction, and stratigraphic position. So far as is presently known, the construction of Room B9 destroyed all but the northwest corner of Room B13. Similarly, the later construction of Room B11 destroyed the floor and most features in slightly more than half of B9.

Room B9 is a large, rectangular pit structure whose long axis is oriented northeast-southwest, with an extended entryway opening to the southeast (see Figure 29). It is approximately 8.8 m long and 4.7 m wide, with a floor area of some 41.4 m<sup>2</sup>; depth from surrounding bedrock surface was ca. 40 cm. With the exception of the Room B13 remnant, the walls of Room B9 above the bedrock cut consist of coursed adobe 25–30 cm thick.

Unfortunately, none of the few recovered construction timbers yielded tree-ring dates, nor were any archaeomagnetically datable remains, such as a hearth or intact wall plaster, present in the excavated portion of Room B9. For dating purposes, therefore, we are limited to the evidence for the construction of overlying Room B11 at ca. A.D. 900 based on two noncutting tree-ring dates (see discussion of Room B11 below). Given the lack of evidence for remodeling, Room B9 was probably built in the second half of the A.D. 800s, perhaps well after A.D. 850, and was destroyed by fire sometime around A.D. 900. Other than Room A71 in Area A, it is the earliest known example of coursed-adobe construction in the Mimbres area.

In its proportions, Room B9 resembles contemporaneous pit structures in the San Simon and Hohokam areas more than anything else, but the fact that the walls were of coursed, puddled adobe construction makes this something of a unique structure. It is certainly without parallel in the Mimbres area and, to my knowledge, elsewhere in the southern Southwest.

Room B11 is one of the more unusual Three Circle phase structures excavated at Old Town. Built around A.D. 900, it was the latest of three pit structures identified in Unit 21, and its construction destroyed much of Room B9. As shown in Figure 29, Room B11 occupies the northeast half of B9, but its construction involved deepening the pit and expanding at least portions of its northeast and northwest walls slightly. The deepening destroyed the floor of B9 and all but the deepest portions of its features.



# EXCAVATIONS AT THE OLD TOWN RUIN

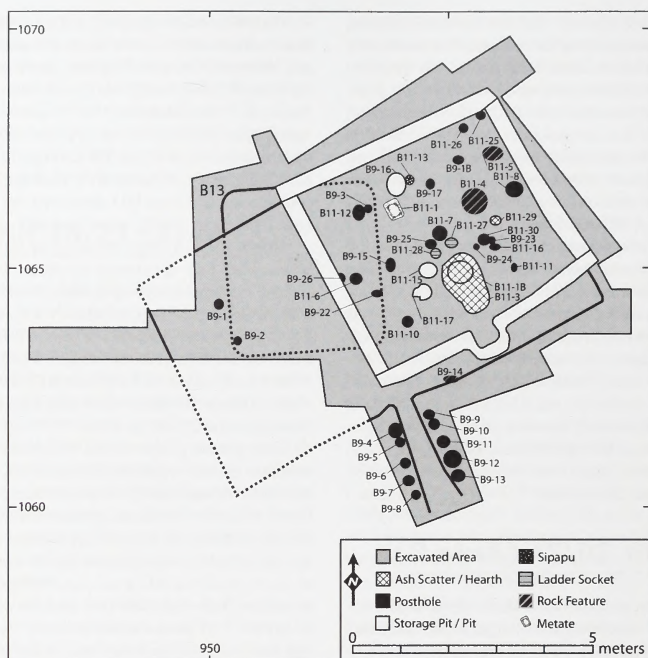


Figure 29. Unit 21. Plan of excavations (*top*) and overhead view at the close of excavations (*bottom*) (south is at top, and meter scale is in Room B11).

Room B11 is 4.45 m northeast-southwest and 4.2 m northwest-southeast, with a floor area of 18.7 m<sup>2</sup>. The walls are of coursed adobe. Entry was via ladder through a ceiling hatchway. The presence of an apparent ventilator identifies this as a kiva, one of the earliest known in the Mimbres area. A second layer of floor adobe indicates at least one episode of remodeling in Room B11.

Our sampling involved complete ¼-inch screening of the fill below wall fall. Sample screening of the very hard wall adobe produced very few artifacts, so most of it was removed without screening. The fill above wall fall was fully screened in the west and south corners as well as in another control area along the northeast wall. Other artifacts were collected from the unscreened fill as they were observed.

## **Unit 22 (Area A)**

Unit 22 began in 1994 as a narrow trench dug in search of evidence for the prehistoric road, and ultimately, it became a substantial excavation unit focusing on large communal pit structure A16 (Figure 30; see Figure 18). Excavations eventually connected it and Unit 32 immediately to the north in Area A and revealed a number of extramural features. In that initial trench, we found a 6-m-wide expanse of relatively smooth bedrock, where we thought the aerial photographs show the road alignment to be. It had been our experience that very little of the bedrock surface remains undisturbed in Area A, having been extensively dug into by the prehistoric inhabitants. Indeed, this was the case on either side of the smooth expanse in the trench, there being multiple pit features on the east side and communal pit structure Room A16 on the west side.

In 1996, Unit 22 was significantly enlarged during excavations in the road, in Room A16, and in the intervening area. Work began with a series of 2-by-2-m squares laid out to investigate, but to avoid completely cutting, the road. Excavation proceeded to the west, eventually reaching Room A16, and ultimately clearing approximately half of its projected floor area (Figure 31; see Figure 30). All extramural fill was passed through ¼-inch screen except that from certain cultural features whose fill was either passed dry through window screen or was collected en masse for flotation. Not all fill from in or above Room A16 was screened, but all fill in a control unit in the northwestern portion was passed through ¼-inch screen. Similarly, all of the roof fall in Room

A16 was screened, as was the fill from all floor features and features in the fill of A16 (using the same procedure as for extramural features).

As a result of these excavations, much changed in our thinking on the road, the adjacent pit structure (A16), and the mass of fill overlying Room A16, previously thought to be the rubble of a Classic Mimbres room block. On the one hand, the road was more accurately placed some 6 m further east and apparently is not invariably indicated by bedrock undisturbed by cultural features as was thought prior to the 1996 season. On the other hand, Room A16 was a much larger pit structure than anticipated, fitting comfortably into the suite of large communal pit structures (or great kivas) previously excavated in the Mimbres area. And perhaps an even greater surprise, the fill overlying and extending north, south, and west beyond the edges of Room A16 proved not to be the rubble mound of a surface pueblo, at least so far as could be ascertained from the 1996 excavations.

We had two primary objectives for the 1998 season in Unit 22. The first was to connect a trench along the north wall of Room A16 with the adjacent perpendicular trench (the "South Trench") in Unit 32. In this, we hoped to relate the stratigraphy in one unit directly to that in the other. Our second objective was to excavate a small area in the south part of Room A16 to collect archaeomagnetic samples of fallen, burned wall plaster in an effort to determine if the plaster cooled in place. The ultimate objective was to determine if the walls had been pushed over en masse into the room soon after burning, as had been inferred from the observations made during the 1996 season. A secondary, but nonetheless important, objective was to recover additional dating samples, so we placed this excavation directly over the south roof-support posthole, successfully gambling that a datable post remnant would be present.

In 1998, we began work in Unit 22 by using a backhoe to remove most of the 1996 backfill adjacent to the south and west excavation walls. This was important in our stratigraphic assessment of the Unit 22 and 32 deposits. This was followed by hand removal of the backfill from the trench over the NW corner of Room A16. In examining these exposures, we noticed a number of important construction features that had gone undetected during the 1996 season. This led to further excavation along the north wall of Room A16 (see Chapter 6, especially description of Room A71).

In studying the complex deposits in the area of the northwest corner of Room A16, it became

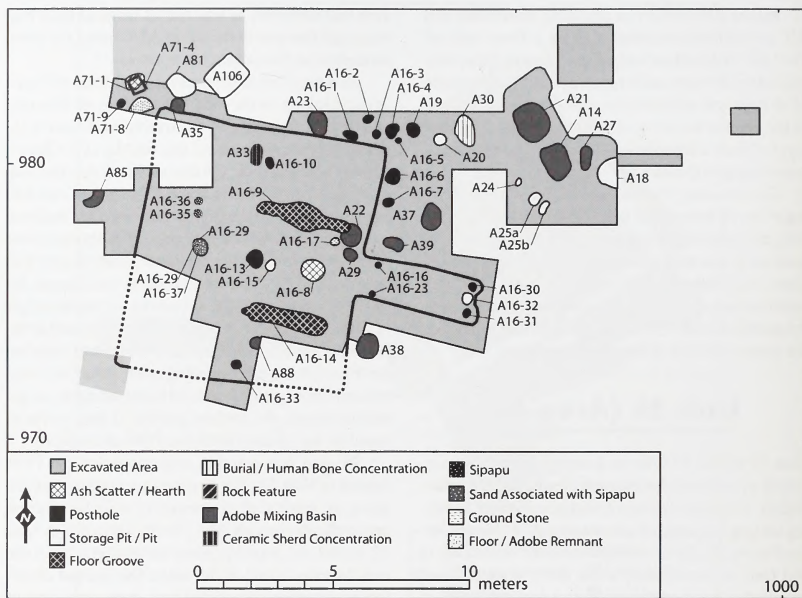


Figure 30. Plan of Unit 22 excavations and principal features. Some features in the northern portion of Unit 22 adjacent to Unit 32 are shown in Figure 39.



Figure 31. Overhead photo of Unit 22 and Room A16 excavations at end of 1996 season.



clear that we could not resolve questions about the sequence of events without additional exposures of the deposits along the outside of the west wall. Consequently, we excavated a 1-by-1-m pit in the edge of what was believed to be a relatively shallow pothole. Ultimately, we excavated a little less than 3 m<sup>2</sup> west of A16's west wall.

Perhaps in part because of these excavations, a large crack developed in the unexcavated fill in the western portion of Room A16 and threatened to collapse. As a safety measure and to prevent the loss of data should there be a collapse, we excavated the affected area, which was ca. 2.5 m north-south and 2.25 m east-west. Although this required considerable effort, the results were well worthwhile.

Elsewhere in Room A16, we excavated an area 1.5 m east-west by 2.75 m north-south in the southern portion, extending to slightly beyond the south wall. A portion of the deposits above the wall had been disturbed by pothunting, but the remainder of the deposits was intact. The disturbed fill was removed separately, and the intact fill was removed basically by stratigraphic deposits, with subdivision of thicker strata as appropriate (all fill passed through ¼-inch screen). For the most part, this was a straightforward process, and we were able to recognize the upper (formerly outside) portion of the fallen wall. Because it was critical that we locate fallen wall plaster without moving it, considerable care was devoted to excavation of this material as well as the underlying roof fall.

During the excavation in the southern part of Room A16, we encountered a substantial gap in bedrock wall base suggestive of an intersecting pit structure or other feature (Figure 32). The proximity to partially excavated Room A49 in nearby Unit 31 led us to wonder if Room A49 might be another large structure. To test this possibility, we dug a 1.2-by-1.6-m pit placed so that, with minimal effort, we could locate the entryway believed to extend to the north-northeast in the area of A16's southwest corner. Suffice it to say here that we quickly determined that A49 was an unusually small room and had no entryway extending to the north-northeast (see discussion of Unit 31 below and Room A49 in Chapter 5). We did, however, locate the southwest corner of Room A16 and in so doing discovered the articulated bones from a pair of barn owl wings, presumably important dedicatory offerings under the corner.

As a result of both the 1996 and 1998 excavations, we now know much more about Room A16, a special structure. The 1998 excavations in Room A16 were,

in fact, important in a number of regards, including dating of construction and destruction, as well as method of construction and aspects of destruction. Pertinent details on Rooms A16 and A71 are presented in Chapter 6 and the mortuary remains are described in Chapter 11.

A description and discussion of the deposits overlying and postdating Room A16's destruction are also provided in Chapter 11, but a brief synopsis is presented here. After the destruction of Room A16, there was considerable activity in the area resulting in the buildup of adobe some 20 or so cm thick. In and on top of this deposit, referred to as Zone C, were a number of adobe-mixing pits probably of late Three Circle phase and Classic period age.

Above this deposit was Zone B (with overlying Zone A being disturbed fill) which was a massive deposit some 50 cm thick that appears to have extended south an unknown distance and north over earlier large communal pit structures, Rooms A71 and A67. It seems basically to be midden fill with large quantities of debris—much of it, we believe, redeposited—although there may have been items such as a dismembered dog deliberately placed there during Zone B deposition (Figure 33). In addition, Zone B extended from west of Room A16 east to approximately the edge of the prehistoric road as well as can be discerned from the aerial imagery. Zone B sloped from west to east and pinched out at the road. In Unit 32, as discussed in more detail below, Zone B (otherwise designated Feature A69) was deposited flush against a low platform (Features A51 and A58) as well as over associated Burial 18, therefore postdating them. Since the A51/A58/Burial 18 complex appears to be late Classic based on the ceramic content of the deposits, Zone B must also be late Classic or later in age. Its ceramic content is much like that of the latest midden deposits under the Terminal Classic rooms immediately west in Unit 1. Although the exact age of these deposits is uncertain, it is clear that they date close to or in the A.D. 1130–1150 range. Additional discussion of this deposit is presented in Chapters 7 and 11.

## **Unit 23 (Area A)**

Unit 23 consists of a narrow, hand-dug trench in the northeastern corner of Area A (see Figure 18) excavated to determine if the prehistoric road could be detected subsurface. This and the trench that initiated work in Unit 22 were placed so that they transected

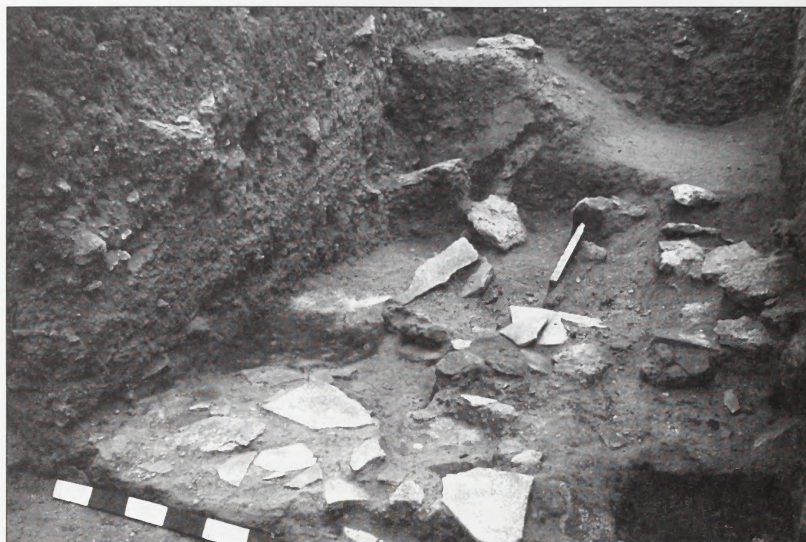


Figure 32. Excavation through fallen south wall in Room A16; slabs were within fallen roof. Wall plaster still in place on the south wall is visible at top center. Gap in wall at upper right represents late prehistoric excavation or possibly pothunter disturbance.



Figure 33. Feature A28, partially articulated dog bones in the fill (Zone B) above the northwest portion of Room A16.

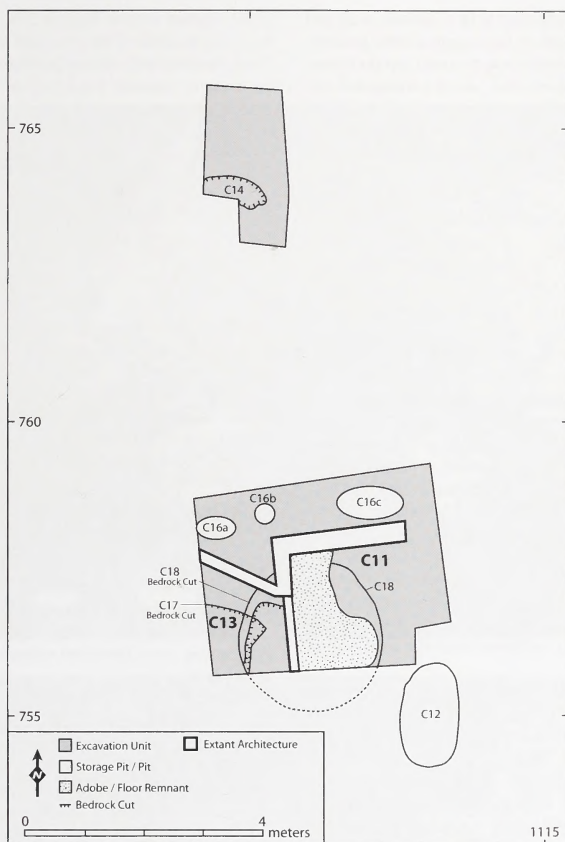


Figure 34. Plan of Unit 26 excavations and features.

the alignment visible on aerial photographs. Most of the bedrock exposed in this trench was undisturbed, but a large pit of undetermined size was encountered in the western end. Because this pit was not excavated, its nature is unknown, but its size is suggestive of a pit structure.

### Unit 24 (Area B)

Following on the trench excavations in Units 22 and 23, we excavated a short trench in the northern part of

Area B from the center of the prehistoric road through the low berm on the west side and two 1-by-1-m<sup>2</sup> squares outside the road, one to the east, one to the west. No features other than the road were found in these modest excavations.

### Unit 26 (Area C)

Located in the northern portion of Area C, Unit 26 consists of two separate excavations (Figure 34; see Figure 27). The larger of the two was placed to



investigate what appeared to be a masonry wall, and the other was placed to investigate another possible wall. The latter proved not to be a wall, but the former seems clearly to have been part of a substantial surface pueblo wall of large tuff slabs laid horizontally. Unfortunately, most of the surface pueblo architectural remains in Unit 26 were as poorly preserved as those in Unit 25, and there was precious little fill above floor remnants. We had a very difficult, often unsuccessful time attempting to define walls because of prehistoric disturbance. Nonetheless, we exposed small remnants of surface architecture that could represent one to three rooms or extramural work areas. In addition, we found several pits containing large amounts of burned rock.

Room C11 is an extremely poorly preserved surface room whose only definite remnants are short segments of masonry walls (north and west) and a small patch of adjacent floor (see Figure 34). No east wall could be defined despite the fact that the floor was rising in that direction, much as floors typically do near walls. Perhaps the wall had been dismantled prehistorically and the rock used in roasting pits such as those nearby in Unit 26. If indeed there was an east wall where expected, Room C11 would have been ca. 2 m east-west, with an unknown north-south dimension. The only other remnant of surface architecture recognized in this unit was a short segment of wall extending northwest from the west wall of Room C11.

Adjacent to Room C11 are several features that appeared just below the ground surface as distinct concentrations of burned rock, some with quantities of ash intermixed. The largest of these, Feature C12, was excavated and found to be oval, 1.55 m north-south, 0.95 m east-west, and 0.20 m deep (Figure 35). The only other one excavated was Feature C16a, also oval but smaller (63 by 38 cm) and shallower (7 cm).

Below Room C11, we found the western edge of a large pit (Feature C18) that intrudes into a pit structure (Room C17). Very little of either was excavated owing to time constraints, but we exposed enough to reveal that the pit structure had a curved north wall, indicating that it probably dates to the Early Pithouse period or to the Georgetown phase of the Late Pithouse period. There are no data on size or orientation of Room C17. It was, however, truncated by the digging of Feature C18, a very large pit estimated to be ca. 2.5 m in diameter. The latter may have had plaster on its bedrock wall, but the bedrock bottom had no preserved adobe floor in the

small exposed section. Feature C18 is considered to be a large example of the pits found elsewhere at Old Town, believed to be storage facilities used during the pit house occupation, but it may instead have been a small pit structure.

## **Unit 27 (Area C)**

Unit 27 is a 1-by-4-m excavation in the area tentatively identified as a plaza in Area C (see Figure 27). As expected, no architectural features were found, but we did expose a very interesting feature designated C22. This is a shallow, circular (ca. 1 m in diameter, 8 cm deep), basin-shaped pit lined with small, thin slabs of rhyolite (Figure 36). Its upper edges are barely below ground surface, and its base is just above the bedrock, which is quite shallow throughout Unit 27. There was no substantial evidence of burning either in the slabs and surrounding fill or in the form of ash or charcoal. The function of this feature is unknown.

## **Units 28 and 29 (Area C)**

Units 28 and 29 are 1-m squares located on the east slope of the ridge in Area C (see Figure 27) excavated to determine depth of trash deposits. No debris deeper than about 10–15 cm was found in either. No features were found and relatively few artifacts were recovered.

In conjunction with excavation of Units 28 and 29, we made a controlled surface collection (3 by 50 m north of the N700 grid line from W1062 west to the W1112 grid line) down the east slope and a general surface collection on the east slope north of the controlled collection area and east of the W1112 grid line. These were made to obtain a broad sample of the ceramics from this part of Area C.

## **Unit 30 (Area B)**

In May 1996, Jeff Leach and Fred Almaraz of the University of Texas at El Paso performed a ground-penetrating-radar survey in the western portion of Area B to investigate an area where augering had detected deeper bedrock suggestive of a pit structure. Based on the radar survey, we excavated a trench in June 1996 (see Figure 24) but found no pit structure or other feature. Evidently, the augering found softer bedrock in this area, producing a false impression of a large pit.



Figure 35. Feature C12, possible roasting pit: partially excavated (*top*) and excavated, with rock contents adjacent (*bottom*).



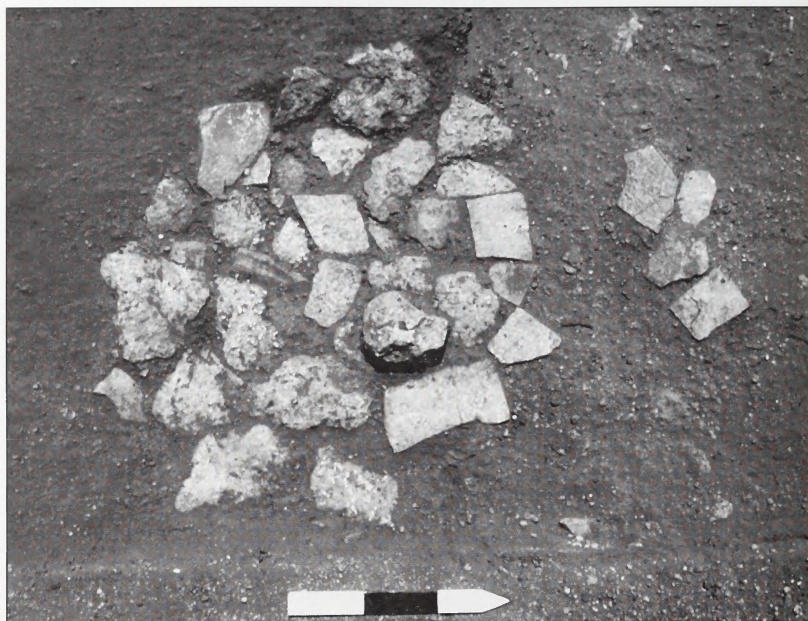


Figure 36. Feature C22, a slab-lined basin.

### **Unit 31 (Area A)**

Unit 31 was excavated in 1997 to test for the existence of another large pit structure in Area A southwest of Room A16 (see Figure 18). An aerial photograph taken in the mid-1980s suggested the presence of a long wall with an alignment similar to that of Room A16 and the prehistoric road and yet significantly different from known Classic Mimbres surface architecture. It was the length and orientation of this possible wall that led to the excavation of Unit 31. By the end of the season, approximately 9 m<sup>2</sup> was excavated, all but one to bedrock (Figure 37). In addition, very shallow excavations were begun but never advanced very far in the immediately adjacent area.

In many ways, the excavations in Unit 31 yielded useful and valuable information, but because of their relatively limited extent, they also proved frustrating. No evidence of a large pit structure was found, but we did excavate portions of two apparently smaller, overlapping rectangular pit structures designated

Rooms A47 and A49 (Figure 38; see Figure 37). Neither pit structure was exposed enough in Unit 31 to reveal size or orientation, but Room A49's northeast corner, found in Unit 22 during exposure of Room A16's southwest corner, revealed the room's east-west dimension. No consensus could be reached on the sequence of construction and use, but the majority opinion was that Room A47 was the earlier of the two. Unfortunately, there was no evidence that either pit structure burned, so we were unable to recover any tree-ring or archaeomagnetic samples for dating. Based on shape alone, both are presumed to date to the Three Circle or possibly San Francisco phase.

### **Unit 32 (Area A)**

Excavations in Unit 32 began in 1997 to investigate possible masonry architecture a few meters east of Terminal Classic Room A1. Additional excavations in 1998 and 1999 significantly expanded our understanding of the complex set of architectural and



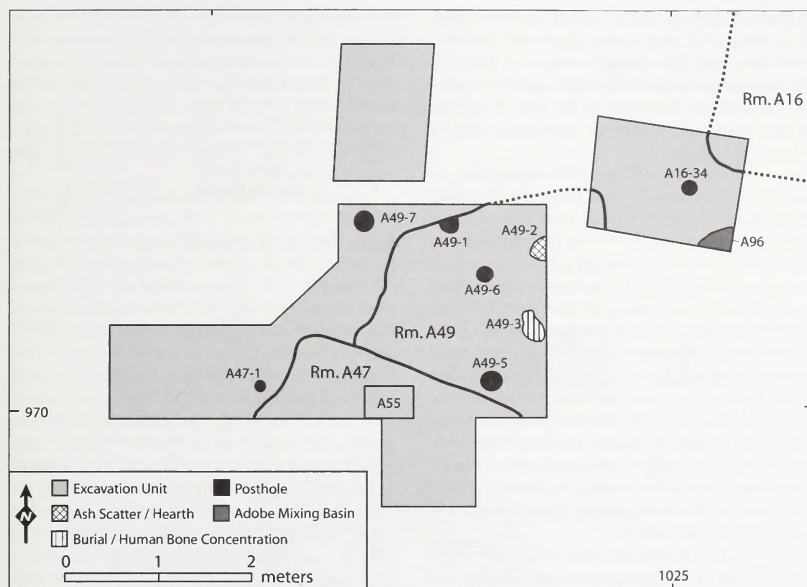


Figure 37. Plan of Unit 31 excavations and principal features; Feature A96 and southwest corner of Room A16 also shown.



Figure 38. Main part of Unit 31 with northwest corners of Rooms A47 and A49 exposed (meter scale; arrow points grid north).

mortuary features as well as midden and other deposits in this part of Area A (see Figure 18). As noted previously, Unit 32 eventually connected with Unit 22 as a result of excavation in Room A71 (Figures 39–42), and the discussion in the Unit 22 section of this chapter presents much information directly relevant to Unit 32.

As a result of the 1997 and 1998 excavations, we have gained a reasonably good grasp of the complex stratigraphic situation in Unit 32. Most of the deposits there are secondary and result from the redeposition of fill acquired elsewhere at the site (see below). Others are primary midden deposits, and some consist of construction debris from various pit structures. There are a number of pit structures in this part of the site, some of them apparently domestic; others, large communal buildings; and one, a small kiva. Most appear to date to the Three Circle phase but some could be earlier. These were filled variously with roof and wall material and/or with midden. In addition, stratified Three Circle and Classic phase midden debris occurred between or over some of the pit structures in the western portion of the unit, but the eastern portion appears to have had little fill on top of bedrock.

The earliest known structure in this part of the site is Room A67, a round communal pit structure some 7 m in diameter that remains minimally investigated. It appears to have been destroyed by burning. A few meters to the south, we found a somewhat larger communal pit structure, A71, which seems to have been D-shaped and probably dates to the San Francisco phase. This partially excavated and much disturbed structure has coursed-adobe walls and is the earliest coursed-adobe structure known in the region. It, too, appears to have been burned, though not so catastrophically as A67 or A16. There may well have been other pit structures in Unit 32 contemporaneous with either or both A67 and A71, but even when found in our excavations, these were not investigated to any significant extent.

Probably sometime in the late A.D. 800s, Room A83, a kiva, was built immediately east of Room A67 (Figure 43; see Figure 39), destroying almost all of A67's entryway. The remainder was sealed with masonry as part of A83 wall construction. At least partly contemporaneous with Room A83 is large Room A16, the nearby communal pit structure in Unit 22. Just west of A83 is Three Circle phase pit house A5 (in Unit 1A).

After the abandonment of Room A5, it and the surrounding area was filled with or covered by Three Circle phase trash above which Classic debris and,

ultimately, a modest amount of Terminal Classic trash (Figure 44) had been deposited. These trash deposits were 1 m or more thick in some places, extending from the Unit 1 area into the western portion of the Unit 32 area. Some of these Terminal Classic trash deposits had been removed to provide a suitable place for construction of Terminal Classic Room A1 (and associated rooms, if any).

A major shift in use of this part of the site occurred with the deposition of a low, dome-shaped pile of nearly sterile fill (Feature A99), apparently followed immediately by deposition of finely stratified Feature A51 (see Figure 44). This produced a low, flat-topped platform that appears to have been deposited against, and flush with, the late and Terminal Classic midden deposits immediately west toward Room A1 (see Figure 44). As part of platform construction, what is believed to have been a single "wall," today represented only by its footing, was built on the platform on a north-south alignment (see Figures 40, bottom, and 42). Perhaps at the same time, Burial 18 was interred in an unusually large pit immediately adjacent to the east edge of the platform (see Figure 43). Excavation of this burial pit evidently destroyed part of the wall of Room A83, the small Three Circle phase kiva.

Our assessment in 1998 was that sometime after interment, possibly within a short period of time, Burial 18 was desecrated. However, subsequent excavations in Room A83 render that inference only tentative. Regardless, apparently soon thereafter, a large volume of fill (designated Feature A69) was placed around the east and north sides of the platform to create a larger surface that sloped gently east to the prehistoric road (see Figures 43 and 44). Its north side, just above the north edge of Room A67, is much steeper (see Figures 40, bottom, and 41), though it is possible that the steepness is a result of modern activity. This addition covered communal pit structures, Rooms A16, A67, and A71, as well as a kiva, Room A83, and Burial 18, and it contained Burial 14 just above Burial 18 (see Figure 39). As noted in the section on Unit 22, it is believed that Burial 14 was interred during the deposition of Feature A69.

Because Room A1 overlies thin Terminal Classic midden deposits, it must be Terminal Classic in age. Similarly, the platform deposits appear to have been placed against existing late and Terminal Classic midden deposits, indicating that the platform must also be Terminal Classic. Thus, it is possible to relate the construction of the platform to construction of surface pueblo Room A1, at least in general. This stratigraphic assessment is consistent with the fact

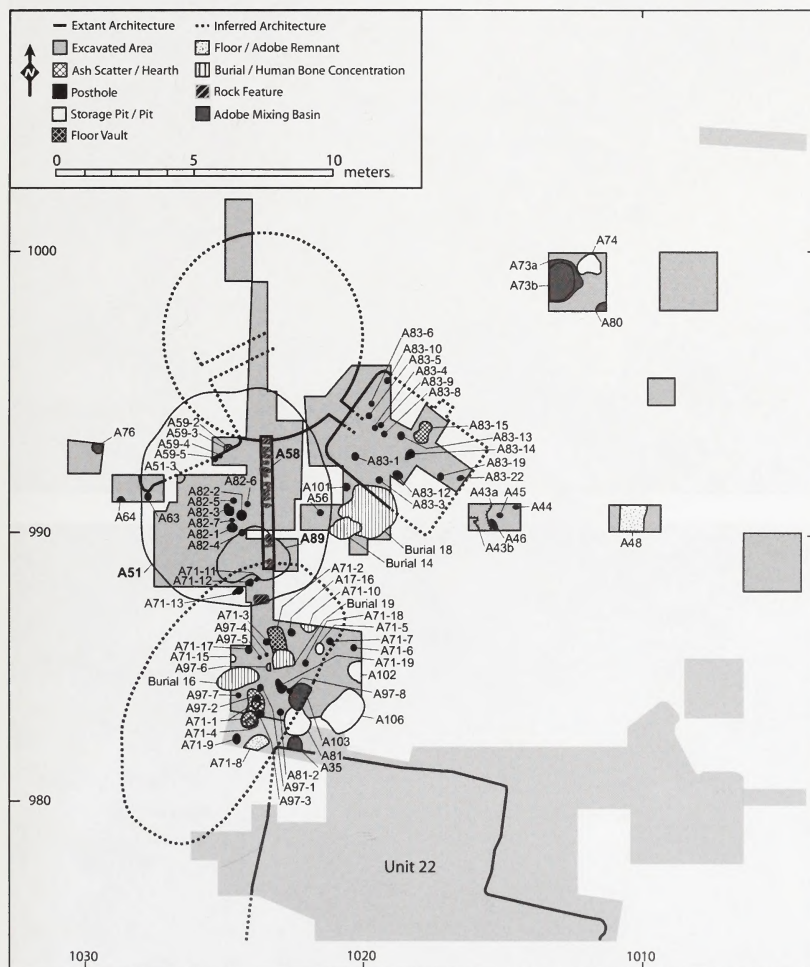


Figure 39. Plan of Unit 32 excavations and principal features, with the northern portion of Unit 22 and features. Unit 32 excavations have solid outlines; those in Unit 22 do not.





Figure 40. View east from prehistoric road to Unit 32 excavation (*top*) and overhead view of Unit 32, looking west (*bottom*).



Figure 41. View south at Unit 32 excavations.



Figure 42. Unit 32, overhead view to the south with Features A51/58 at top center.



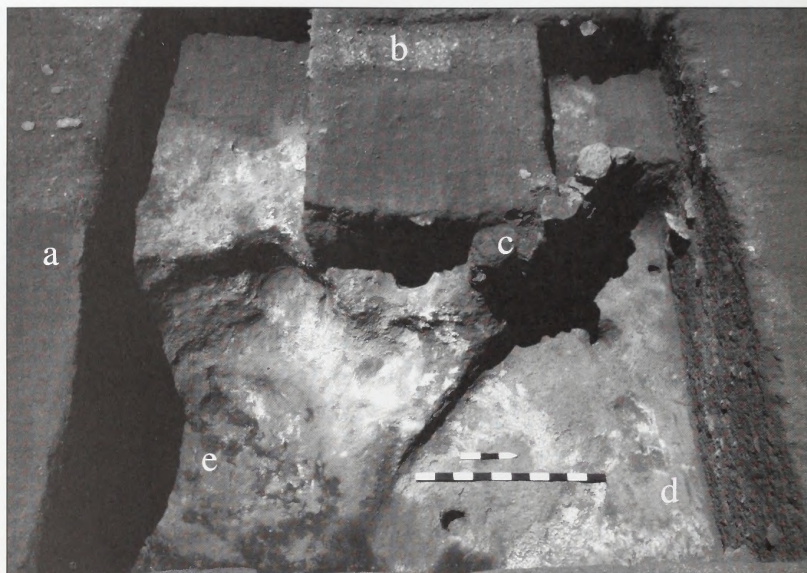


Figure 43. Unit 31 excavation, with (a) modern surface of Feature A69 and the mass of fill placed against the east edge of (b) Feature 51. The masonry wall remnant (c) and floor (d) of Room A83 were intruded upon by Burial 18 (e).

that the ceramic content of the platform deposits is similar to that below A1 in having small quantities of Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III (including polychrome and flare-rimmed bowls), Playas Red Corrugated, and early El Paso Polychrome. On this basis, it seems likely that the construction of the platform took place close in time to that of Room A1, sometime around A.D. 1130.

Because of the extensive pothunting immediately south of this platform, it is not absolutely certain that the A69 deposits are equivalent to Zone B, the mass of fill above large communal pit structure Room A16 in Unit 22. However, it is clear that the top of the platform in Unit 32 was about the same height as the deposit over A16, so it seems probable that the Zone B deposits above and beyond Room A16 are equivalent to the Feature A69 deposits in Unit 32. In terms of ceramic content, they are virtually identical, both containing modest amounts of Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, and Classic corrugated, even an occasional Playas or other Terminal Classic type, in addition to much larger quantities of earlier types.

In addition to the remains described thus far for Unit 32, there were several other features in test pits in the eastern portion. These include adobe-mixing basins and storage pits (Figure 45). One small test pit (1 by 1 m) was excavated to test an anomaly found during the 2003 magnetometer survey and suspected of being a pit structure. No pit feature of any sort was encountered in the test pit placed in the middle of the anomaly.

### **Unit 35 (Area A)**

Unit 35 consists of a small excavation (3 m<sup>2</sup>) dug on the edge of a large anomaly identified during a magnetometer survey of eastern Area A in 2003 (see Figure 18). The corner of a rectangular pit structure, Room A120, was found in the northwest corner of the excavation (Figures 46 and 47), but not enough excavation was done to determine if the large magnetic anomaly actually reflected this particular pit structure. In addition to Room A120, several probable postholes were found in Unit 35.



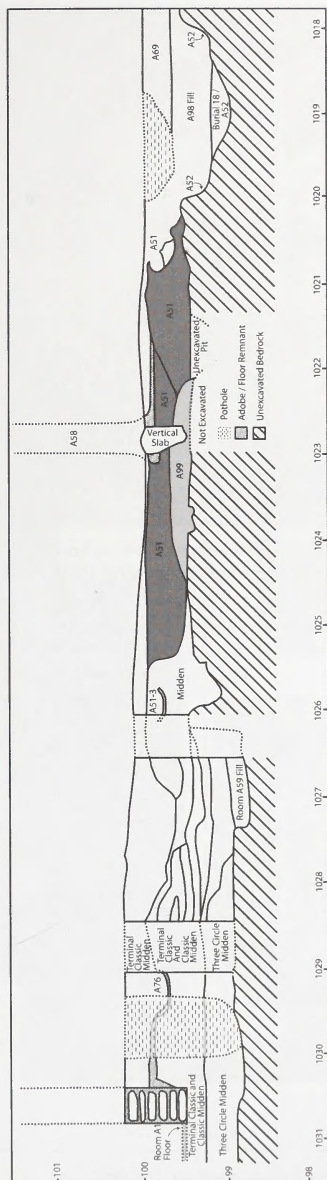


Figure 44. Schematic east-west profile through Unit 32.



Figure 45. Features A73, an adobe-mixing basin, at bottom, and A74, a large pit at left, in Unit 31, 2-by-2-m test pit N998 W1011 (meter scale; arrow points grid north).

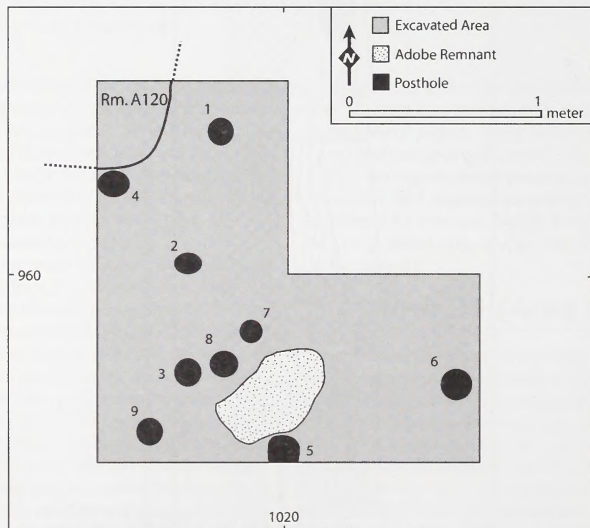


Figure 46. Plan of Unit 35 excavations and features.

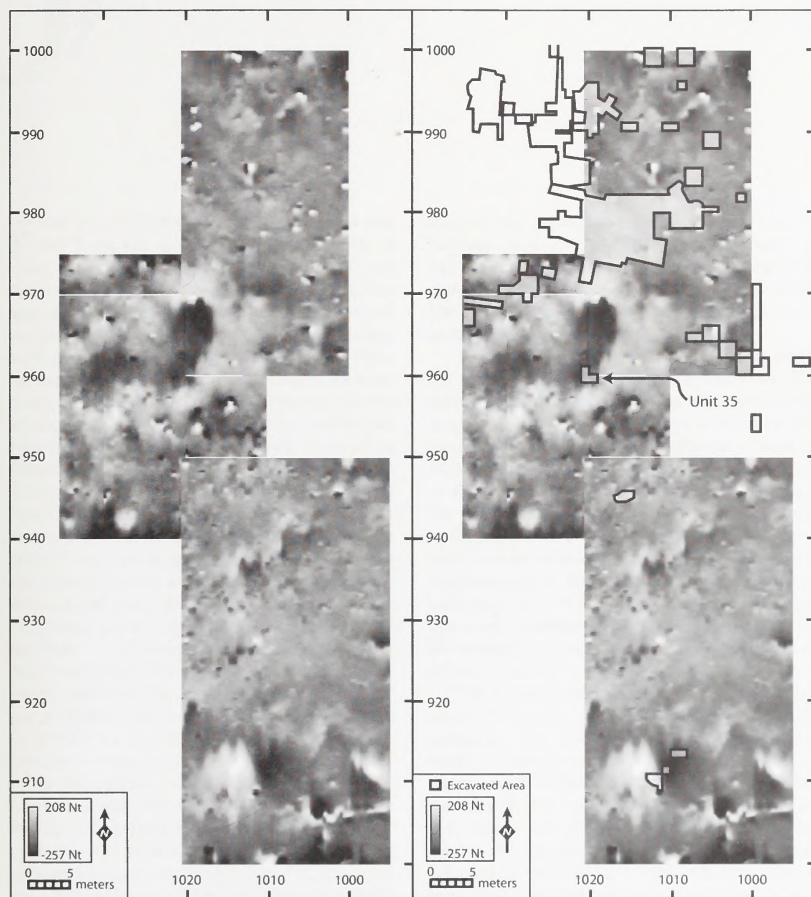
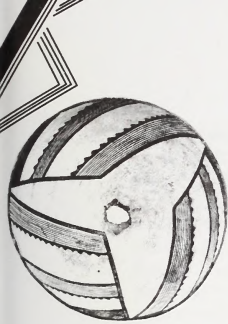


Figure 47. 2003 magnetometer data for eastern Area A. Excavation units shown on right image for comparison.







## CHAPTER 4

# Architectural Overview

From the 1989–2000 excavations, we know that

Old Town was occupied for many hundreds of years, from at least A.D. 500 to around A.D. 1300, and perhaps a few decades longer. Architecturally, this long period of occupation is reflected in the variety of structures built using most of the major construction techniques known in the prehistoric Southwest. There are the typical pole-and-adobe pit houses, masonry pueblo room blocks, and coursed-adobe room blocks which, as a group, generally reflect the well-known Mimbres-area architectural sequence discussed in Chapter 1. However, the ancient inhabitants of Old Town also built both domestic and communal pit structures with coursed-adobe walls and several pit houses with thick masonry walls comparable to those of the Classic period surface pueblo. Thus, although the general Mimbres architectural sequence was followed at Old Town, there were a number of notable exceptions. It is also important to note that not all of the kinds of structures known in Mimbres sites have been encountered during our excavations. Classic period small kivas, for example, are known at a number of Mimbres sites, yet none has been identified so far at Old Town. It is likely, however, that they are present in parts of the site that remain to be investigated.

In this chapter, the architectural remains documented during the 1989–2003 excavations are described in a general sense except for the prehistoric road, which is discussed in Chapter 10, and the set of mortuary features relating to Burial 18, which are described in Chapter 11. Detailed descriptions of the pit structures and the surface rooms are provided in Chapters 5–8.

From the earliest descriptions of Old Town in the 1800s and well into the twentieth century, the most obvious architectural remnants have been those of the Classic Mimbres masonry pueblo in Area A. The

later and less prominent remains of coursed-adobe buildings in Area C have received less attention, and the earlier pit house remains went essentially unnoticed until the beginning of our excavations in 1989. Thus, it is useful to summarize briefly the basic architecture by period and phase.

As revealed by our investigations, the most horizontally extensive occupation of Old Town was during the Late Pithouse period when structures were present in Areas A, B, C, and probably on the low rise on private property northwest of Area B (Table 9). It is impossible to provide a firm estimate of the number of pit structures in all of these areas, but several hundred seems plausible based on our findings in Areas A–C. Considering that a few hundred years are represented, however, the number of contemporaneous domestic pit structures probably never exceeded 100 and may well have been but half that. Large communal pit structures are confined to the northeast portion of Area A, at least so far as is presently known.

The Classic pueblo component appears to be confined to Area A, where the rubble of the masonry pueblo has long been apparent. Indeed, walls were readily identified well into the 1950s, and some segments are still visible. In fact, a general layout of the pueblo is visible even from a low aerial perspective, such as that afforded by a hydraulic lift. The most useful depiction of this architecture is the map prepared by Nels Nelson in 1920. When this map is overlain onto the 1937 aerial photograph and certain rooms and corners are matched to those found in our excavations, one can begin to appreciate the scale of the Classic pueblo architecture present. It covers an area nearly 100 m north-south and close to that east-west. For the most part, Nelson mapped only perimeter walls, but he also mapped a few individual

Table 9. Architectural Types by Area

Architectural Types	Area			
	A	B	C	D
Pit structures				
Domestic (pit houses)				
Pole and adobe	X		X	
Masonry	(possibly)	X		
Communal/ceremonial				
Small (kiva)				
Coursed adobe		X		
Masonry	X			
Large (great kiva)				
Coursed adobe	X			
Other	X			
Possibly communal				
Coursed adobe		X		
Surface pueblos				
Classic period (masonry)				
Masonry	X			
Terminal Classic period				
Masonry	X			
Black Mountain phase				
Coursed adobe			X	(possibly)

rooms in addition to spaces he considered courtyards. Even if Nelson was correct about identifying these spaces as being courtyards, one can project some 200 ground floor rooms for the Classic/Terminal Classic pueblo.

The Black Mountain phase architecture consists of an undetermined number of rooms in two and perhaps three room blocks in Area C and possibly a very small room block in Area D (see Table 9). As discussed elsewhere, evidence to date suggests that perhaps 50 or more rooms are arrayed north, east, and south of a small plaza or courtyard area. These rooms are of different sizes, ranging from around 10 to nearly 40 m<sup>2</sup> in floor area. It is also possible that there is a small room block in Area D, some 50 m out in the floodplain. This area was extensively plowed in the past, so it is impossible to know if a light concentration of small cobbles and boulders among a light scatter of Black Mountain phase ceramics is indicative of architecture. The apparent lack of Mimbres Black-on-white ceramics suggests a Black Mountain rather than a Terminal Classic date.

## Construction Techniques

As indicated previously, there is considerable architectural variability at Old Town. Much of it reflects long-term regional trends, but the method of wall construction apparently varied according to the intended use of a particular structure. By and large, the common regional distinction between domestic and communal architecture—based on room size, construction technique, means of access, and floor and wall features—obtains at Old Town. In our sample, both types of architecture were found for the Late Pithouse period (Areas A and B), perhaps for the Terminal Classic room block in Area A, and probably for the Black Mountain phase pueblo room block in Area C.

Because all of the known pit structures at Old Town are on the volcanic tuff landform above and adjacent to the Mimbres River floodplain, they were all dug into the solid tuff bedrock. Although this rock is not especially hard, it nonetheless is resistant



enough that structure pits are relatively shallow, rarely much more than half a meter deep. Presumably, the tuff was broken up with large, hard stones so that it could be readily removed; whether the loosened blocks of tuff were large enough to use for masonry wall construction is unknown. The bottoms of these pits generally sloped slightly from the perimeter to the center. In most cases, the surfaces were evened in preparation for being covered with floor adobe; in a few cases, the pit bottom appears to have been used without an adobe floor and probably became smoother with use. The sides of the pits were normally covered with plaster that was usually continuous with the floor adobe.

## Wall Construction Techniques

Wall construction, whether in a pit structure or pueblo room block, varies considerably in the buildings excavated at Old Town. The three basic methods so far known are pole-and-adobe, masonry, and coursed adobe. Pole-and-adobe walls were used for some pit structures. Buildings with masonry walls are known from Three Circle, Classic, and Black Mountain phase contexts, whereas coursed-adobe wall construction was used in the Late Pithouse period and in the Black Mountain phase.

### Pole and Adobe

Some of the pit houses had pole-and-adobe wall construction of the type that was clearly described by Haury (1936) at Harris Village and that has been found at pit house sites throughout the Mimbres area. At Old Town, these are recognizable by the row of postholes in the bedrock immediately adjacent to the pit edges. In most cases, the wall plaster appears to be continuous from the floor to the roof, smoothly covering the bedrock-pit portion of the wall up to the pole-and-adobe portion. Relatively few of the known pit houses at Old Town clearly had this type of wall construction, but it is suspected that most of the minimally investigated pit structures in Areas A and C had pole-and-adobe walls. In these cases, we simply did not expose enough area outside the pit edges to determine which method of wall construction was used.

A modified version of the typical pole-and-adobe wall construction technique was used in Room A16, a large, rectangular communal pit structure. The verti-

cal timbers in the wall were load-bearing members. Much of the weight was presumably borne by the larger posts in the north and south walls, which were aligned with the large interior roof-support posts. The principal deviation from the typical techniques includes the use of large tuff slabs set vertically in the base of the wall and oriented parallel to it. Above and around these slabs, vertically oriented layers of adobe several centimeters thick and, in some cases, very poorly consolidated, was applied. Ultimately, these walls were at least 50 cm thick at the base. This method of wall construction was readily apparent in the well-preserved fallen walls and is described in greater detail in Chapter 6.

### Masonry

Masonry was widely used at Old Town from at least A.D. 900 through the time of Terminal Classic construction (ca. A.D. 1150) and, to some extent, even into the 1200s. Regardless of whether a building was a pit house or a surface structure, the masonry was reasonably solid because relatively flat pieces of tuff were readily available onsite (Figure 48). Most of the masonry walls found at Old Town were approximately 50 cm thick, with the stones set in copious quantities of adobe mortar. In some rooms, the masonry walls had numerous tuff slabs set vertically but perpendicular to the wall axis; a particularly notable example is Room A1 (Figure 49).

In the Area B pit houses, the masonry walls were built immediately on the edge of the bedrock pit. Given the shallowness of the pits, most of the structures would have been situated above ground. These walls clearly would have been load bearing and able to support the structure's evidently flat roof.

In the Mimbres area, most small kivas had masonry walls above the pit edges, and most had posts embedded in the masonry. We do not know if this was the case with Room A83; it is the only one of the two kivas excavated to date at Old Town with masonry walls. Because only a short segment of masonry was intact, we could not determine if the walls of Room A83 contained posts like most other area kivas. In the case of Room B11, a structure with coursed adobe walls, we did not look for, or observe, evidence of embedded posts; whether such evidence was present is unknown.

In Area A, where there were many pit structures loosely filled with trash and sediment, wall footings were frequently used for later buildings (see Figure 48).



Figure 48. West wall of Room A7 showing footing and doorway into Room A11.

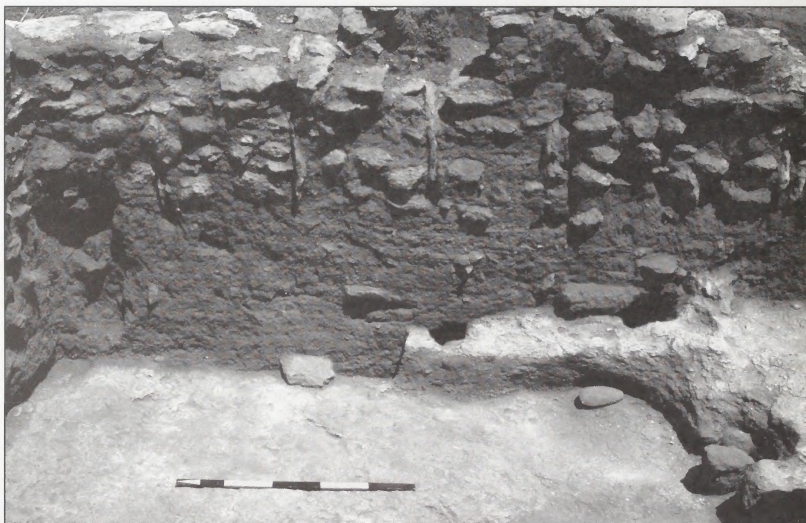


Figure 49. East wall of Room A1. This room overlay Room A5, a Three Circle phase pit house that had been filled and covered by late Three Circle phase and Classic period trash. Note slabs set vertically in wall.





Figure 50. Fragments of intensely burned coursed adobe from Room B11.

Typically, these footings consisted of vertically set slabs of tuff, but, occasionally, worn-out metates or slabs of a reddish rhyolite (available around the south end of the site) were employed. Although the use of footings was presumably required for stable masonry walls built on loose fill, some very substantial walls lacked them. This fact may have implications regarding the number of stories or perhaps the height of walls in these pit structures, an issue discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

## Coursed Adobe

It came as something of a surprise when excavations at Old Town revealed three pit structures with walls built of coursed adobe (following the definition in Schaafsma and Riley [1999:242–244] and Stubbs and Stallings [1953:26]). On the other hand, it was no surprise that wall construction in the Black Mountain phase pueblo was predominantly coursed adobe. Remarkably, the coursed-adobe walls in the pit structures were better preserved than were the much later remnants in the Black Mountain phase pueblo, surely because they were more deeply buried and therefore better protected.

The coursed adobe in pit structures A71, B9, and B11 was preserved in relatively large segments

despite the apparently deliberate destruction of all three buildings. The latter two, and perhaps all three, appear to have been destroyed by burning. In each, the courses were generally 20–30 cm wide and had convex upper and concave lower surfaces (Figure 50). So far as can be determined, these were full-height, load-bearing walls, although interior posts probably bore much of the roof weight. Only communal pit structure Room A71 clearly had structural timbers within its coursed-adobe walls. These were quite distinct, even more than those in a slightly later communal pit structure, Room A16.

In Area C, the footings of Black Mountain phase walls differed from those underneath Terminal Classic rooms in Area A. In the surface rooms excavated in Area C, some walls were built on bedrock, whereas others were built over old pit houses. In almost all cases, the walls had footings, although the type varied according to substrate. Those built over pit houses had deeper footing trenches dug into pit house fill. Elsewhere, shallower footing trenches were dug into bedrock. The footings were adobe, although in some of these trenches, slabs of various sizes had been set vertically either along, or perpendicular to, the trench axis for most of its length. The walls themselves also contained slabs within the adobe, possibly tying courses to one another.



## Adobe-Mixing Pits

During the course of our excavations, we encountered a number of adobe-lined basins that were first thought to be extramural hearths because of the presence of charcoal and/or ash (Figure 51). The minimal evidence for heating, based on archaeomagnetic analysis of samples from several such features, however, indicates that they were not cooking hearths. Indeed, several of these features contained multiple layers of adobe, even to the point of being completely filled (Figure 52, top). These were generally present near Terminal Classic walls but were found in a number of contexts and are not all necessarily Classic in age (see Figure 51). The same kind of feature was common at NAN Ranch (Shafer and Drollinger 1998).

In contrast, there were a few similar basins that were literally full of ash and charcoal. Several of these were found above the southwest corner of Room A2 but below the floor of Room A57, both Terminal Classic pueblo rooms. One of the larger and best preserved is Feature A121, roughly a meter in diameter and completely full of ash and charcoal (see Figure 52, bottom). Archaeomagnetic samples from the adobe lining did not yield a date but suggested that there had been some heating. These features are considered to have been adobe-mixing basins or pits.

## Doors and Entryways

In all but three of the pit structures so far excavated at Old Town (excluding those only minimally tested), access was via an extended entryway like those found in other Mimbres sites. Two exceptions (Rooms A83 and B11) are Three Circle phase kivas that were clearly entered through a ceiling hatchway. A pair of holes in the floor of Room B11 is presumed to have held the bases of the ladder poles, but such holes were not clearly present in A83. A third pit structure, Room A5, also had a ceiling entry after its original extended entryway was sealed with a masonry wall; like Room B11, A5's ceiling hatchway is evidenced by a pair of holes in the floor that presumably held ladder poles.

The extended entryways of Old Town pit structures are like those at other sites; the only characteristic of note is that virtually none slope from the outdoor ground surface to the floor. Almost all have one or more steps with level floors in between. Most are quite narrow, ca. 50 cm or less, but the larger structures have longer and/or wider entryways.

Several doors were found in both the Terminal Classic and Black Mountain phase room blocks,

mostly in the former (see Figure 48). The majority connect two rooms to one another, but two are in exterior walls of Terminal Classic rooms. For the most part, the doors have slightly raised thresholds, and a sill that usually consists of one or more rhyolite slabs (Figure 53). In some doorways, the edges are also framed with vertical rhyolite slabs. One door in the east wall of Terminal Classic Room A7 had been sealed with masonry, and a door in its north wall had been modified into a vent.

## Windows and Vents

In a few pit structures and surface rooms, we found evidence for wall openings other than doors. There was, for example, a clearly defined opening in the north wall of Room B11 that was quite distinct in the coursed-adobe wall, which had been laid over en masse as part of the room's destruction (see Chapter 5). Similarly, a sealed wall opening was preserved in the slumped south wall of Room B2; evidently, the opening would have been just above ground level, opposite the entryway.

The only interior vent identified is between Rooms A7 and A9, and it was created when the doorway there was sealed (see description of Room A7 in Chapter 7). An apparent exterior vent is also present in the north wall of Room A6, but it is poorly preserved because of pothunting.

In addition, there are two ventilators in Terminal Classic rooms. These interesting features are in adjacent rooms A9 and A112, each in the east wall (see discussion in Chapter 7). At the time these rooms were constructed, the exterior surface was nearly 0.5 m higher than the room floors; consequently, it would have been necessary to dig and line vertical shafts from the actual wall vent to the outside ground surface. The vents themselves are framed with rhyolite slabs. A112 was the only room excavated to any extent, and it is a long, narrow room with a flagstone floor and large rhyolite slabs set vertically at the wall base. No hearth was present in the undisturbed portion, and the reason that these rooms would have had such ventilators is unclear.

## Roof Construction

It is not surprising that most evidence for roofing comes primarily from fallen roofs in burned structures, but additional information derives from roof-support postholes. Generally speaking, no roofing methods have been identified at Old Town that differ significantly from what has been found elsewhere in

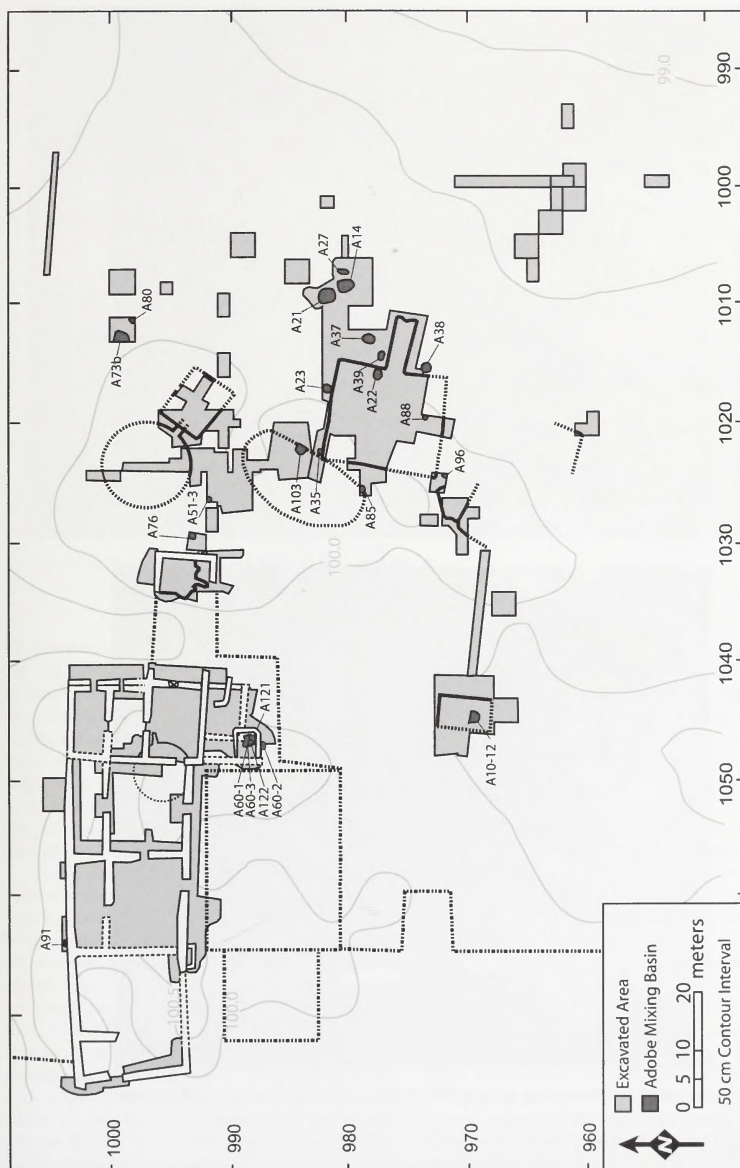


Figure 51. Location of adobe-mixing basins in Area A units.



Figure 52. Adobe-mixing basins: Feature A10-12 (*top*); Feature A121 (*bottom*).





Figure 53. Doorway between Rooms A11 and A110.

the Mimbres area. Minor details of interest include the tied bundles of sacaton grass used as thatching in Room A7 and the placement of a layer of very thin slabs on the thatching in communal pit structure Room A16 and the central area of kiva Room A83. In the pit structures Rooms B8 and B11, numerous large sherds had been placed horizontally within the roof adobe, presumably to strengthen the roof. These sherds were placed close to one another, forming a distinct layer.

The only ceiling openings identified in our excavations are ladder hatches or smoke vents. The former were discussed previously, and there is relatively little to say about the smoke vents. In some of the smaller pit structures, concentrations of rhyolite slabs were found in the roof fall in the general area of the hearth and are presumed to have framed smoke holes in the roof. A remarkably well-preserved smoke hole was found in large communal pit structure Room A71. In exposing its fallen roof, which lay directly upon the floor, a very distinct rectangular opening in the roof adobe was found partially overlying the hearth (see Chapter 6). This is the most clearly defined smoke vent found in our excavations.

One of our most interesting findings is the apparent general increase in the use of piñon, ponderosa pine, and Douglas fir over time, at least through the Terminal Classic. It must be understood, however, that this general statement and the discussion that follows are based on a data set that consists of identified pieces of charred wood, relatively few of which are complete timber segments. That is, crushing of charred timbers by overburden and, more important, the breaking of charred timbers by pothunters has greatly increased the number of identifiable specimens relative to the original. Having both intact and highly fragmented specimens, there seemed to be no particularly good way to analyze the data for temporal variation without considering all as equivalent. This undoubtedly increases the counts per species but is assumed here to have no disproportionate effect on the relative quantities per species per context.

The only San Francisco phase structure from which architectural wood was recovered is Room A71, a great kiva (Table 10). Only small-diameter charred wood, probably secondary beams, was present in the excavated portion of A71, and all of it was cottonwood.

Table 10. Presence of Wood Species, by Room and Phase

Room, by Phase	Room size (m <sup>2</sup> )	Douglas Fir	Spruce/ Fir	Ponderosa Pine	Piñon Pine	Juniper	Cottonwood	Oak	Other	Total
<b>San Francisco phase</b>										
Room A71	≈50	—	—	—	—	—	92	—	12	104
<b>Three Circle phase</b>										
Room A5	9	—	—	—	—	5	2	—	23	30
Room A16	78	39	4	692	17	30	122	—	26	930
Room A83	18.4	—	—	1	39	68	—	—	69	177
Room B2	12	—	—	—	22	35	7	—	12	76
Room B4	17.6	12	5	28	431	396	105	1	252	1,230
Room B6	2	—	—	1	3	—	—	—	—	4
Room B8	12	—	—	—	47	38	6	—	19	110
Room B9	41	—	—	—	2	2	—	—	1	5
Room B10	10	—	—	1	23	11	—	—	5	40
Room B11	18	—	—	—	17	32	—	—	—	49
Subtotal		51	9	723	601	617	242	1	407	2,651
<b>Terminal Classic phase</b>										
Room A1/5	16?	—	3	30	17	85	11	1	104	251
Room A2	13	—	—	10	—	5	3	2	17	37
Room A3	2–3	55	—	40	6	13	5	—	6	125
Room A4	unknown	9	—	16	4	12	1	—	25	67
Room A6	8–10	21	—	2	1	2	3	—	4	33
Room A7	24	65	—	16	1	10	1	—	6	99
Room A9	15	9	2	13	—	9	2	—	2	37
Room A11	44	—	16	7	1	3	—	—	—	27
Room A92	15.8	—	—	1	4	—	—	—	—	5
Room A110	40.3	1	18	10	1	17	—	3	5	55
Room A112	12	4	4	23	5	4	1	—	1	42
Room A116	18+	—	—	14	—	—	—	—	—	14
Subtotal		164	43	182	40	160	27	6	170	792
<b>Black Mountain phase</b>										
All rooms combined		—	—	—	119	115	70	—	39	343

Note: Table includes all probable architectural wood specimens submitted to the Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research. Some were large beam fragments, but most were small pieces from highly fractured, charred beams.

Our Three Circle phase sample is far larger and rather different. Several pit houses, two kivas, and one great kiva yielded many samples. Except in Room A16, the great kiva built ca. A.D. 874–875, virtually all of the architectural wood used in these structures was either piñon or juniper, with minor amounts of oak and other non-coniferous species. Trace amounts of Ponderosa pine were, however, used in construction of Rooms B4 and B10, and there was also a trace of Douglas fir in B4 (the roof of this pit house was rebuilt when the entryway was moved from the south

to the east side, probably in the mid–A.D. 900s). In contrast, cottonwood and Ponderosa pine were the primary species used in the roof of large Room A16, but Douglas fir and piñon were also used to some extent, as were modest quantities of other species, even including a bit of spruce/fir. The preserved interior posts were both Douglas fir.

A very similar selection of tree species appears to have been used for the Terminal Classic rooms regardless of size (see Table 10). Douglas fir, Ponderosa pine, and juniper were the principal species

in this sample, with piñon and spruce/fir also present, particularly in rooms A11 and A110. Practically none of these specimens could be confidently linked to any given room, as most were found in disturbed fill, but the distinctive species arrays in some rooms suggest that most specimens actually derive from the Terminal Classic rooms to which they were tentatively assigned.

Rooms A11 and A110, as well as many of the other rooms, are large and, so far as could be learned in A110, had two roof support posts on their long axis. Thus, the need for unusually long beams (ca. 4 m) was restricted to the very large rooms like A11 and A110. Medium-sized rooms like A7 would have needed beams only 2.5–3 m long, and smaller rooms like A112 would have needed beams 1 m shorter.

Of the two presumed roof support posts in large Room A110, the only one left by the pothunters is juniper. Above the floors, this post was only some 15 cm in diameter but was much larger below. It seems unlikely that two such posts would have been sufficient to support a heavy roof in this room, and it is possible that there were other posts in the disturbed portions of the room (along all four walls).

Our very limited sample from Area C pueblo rooms suggests that during the Black Mountain phase, piñon, juniper, cottonwoods and other non-coniferous species were used, although we recovered only rather small fragments of beams. However, Table 11 shows that in the sample from the Walsh site, a Black Mountain phase pueblo just across the Mimbres River from Old Town, Douglas fir and Ponderosa pine together represent 9 percent and piñon, 39 percent (percentages acquired from unpublished data on file at the Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research, University of Arizona). Whether beams of these species were also used in building the Black Mountain phase pueblo rooms at Old Town is unknown, but their use at the contemporaneous Walsh site suggests that it is possible.

Two trends seem evident in the data on tree species used for roof construction at Old Town. First, given the long-term occupation of the Mimbres valley by a relatively large population, it is reasonable to infer that local sources of construction timber, especially juniper in the lower valley, were depleted fairly early, forcing Old Town residents to rely on increasingly distant sources of construction timber. The nearest source of long, straight construction timbers would have been the mountains to the east, north, and northwest. Today, sources of piñon are several miles away, ponderosa even farther, and Douglas fir

more distant still. Thus, as the sources of construction wood became more distant over time, the Old Town Mimbresños would likely have preferentially selected piñon over juniper and then Ponderosa pine and Douglas fir over piñon.

A second trend seems to relate to room size and the length of beams that were needed, regardless of time period. That is, both Douglas fir and Ponderosa pine were used in quantity for roof construction in large rooms like Three Circle phase great kiva Room A16 as well as the larger Terminal Classic rooms. These two species are only modestly represented in the smaller pit structures, in which piñon and juniper were the main species used. Together, these trends resulted in a large proportion of Ponderosa pine and Douglas fir in all of the Terminal Classic rooms, large and small, from which we have meaningful samples. Given that these two species are extensively represented in samples from disturbed contexts in the Terminal Classic rooms, it is likely that most of these specimens derive from these rooms' roofs rather than the underlying pit houses and Classic rooms. If we can use the data from the nearby Walsh site, the frequent use of pines and Douglas fir there during the Black Mountain phase is consistent with both trends and may be a more representative sample than those available from less well-preserved contexts at Old Town.

In short, over time, the use of trees acquired from more distant sources apparently increased, probably in part because the zone that was depleted of trees suitable for construction use became ever-larger. Thus, it may well be that, over time, Old Town residents were forced to travel longer and longer distances to obtain new construction timber, although at any time during occupation, the needs of particular rooms may have required more and longer beams available only in distant areas.

It may also be that the positioning of posts on the long axis in pit structures A83 and B2 was staggered to accommodate shorter beams, thus maximizing the use of wood resources. In addition, because pit structures at Old Town were fairly shallow, the traditional pole-and-adobe construction would have required more linear feet of timber than would have masonry or coursed-adobe load-bearing walls. One could speculate that the use of masonry and coursed-adobe walls was an adaptation to increasing costs of acquiring construction wood rather than to other factors. It is interesting to note that the use of numerous posts within the walls of the great kivas (A16 and A71), together with the large number of beams



Table 11. Use of Construction Wood in the Mimbres River Valley, by Period

Period and Site, by Location	Douglas Fir (%)	Spruce/Fir (%)	Ponderosa Pine (%)	Pinon Pine (%)	Juniper (%)	Cottonwood (%)	Oak (%)	Other (%)	Total
<b>Upper valley</b>									
Late Pitthouse period (Galaz)	—	62 (10)	12 (2)	297 (50)	202 (34)	22 (4)	3 (TR)	1 (TR)	599
Classic period (Mattocks, Mitchell)	—	3 (TR)	49 (5)	724 (77)	160 (17)	1 (TR)	—	1 (TR)	938
Cliff phase (Janss)	—	—	31 (22)	28 (20)	50 (36)	4 (3)	3 (2)	24 (17)	140
<b>Middle valley</b>									
Late Pitthouse period (NAN)	—	—	5 (8)	15 (23)	21 (32)	9 (14)	11 (17)	11 (23)	72
Classic period (NAN)	3 (TR)	—	82 (15)	121 (22)	116 (22)	130 (24)	45 (8)	41 (8)	538
Black Mountain phase (Montoya)	2 (2)	1 (1)	76 (72)	9 (9)	3 (3)	14 (13)	—	—	105
Cliff phase (Disert)	—	—	33 (32)	11 (10)	36 (35)	15 (15)	2 (2)	6 (6)	103
<b>Lower valley</b>									
Late Pitthouse period (Old Town)	51 (2)	9 (TR)	723 (26)	601 (22)	617 (22)	334 (12)	1 (TR)	419 (15)	2,755
Terminal Classic (Old Town)	164 (21)	43 (5)	182 (23)	40 (5)	160 (20)	27 (3)	6 (1)	170 (21)	792
Black Mountain phase (Walsh)	2 (2)	—	6 (7)	34 (39)	2 (2)	34 (39)	—	10 (11)	88
Black Mountain phase (Old Town)	—	—	—	6 (7)	2 (2)	49 (60)	—	25 (30)	82
Walsh + Old Town percentage	(TR)	—	(4)	(24)	(2)	(49)	—	(21)	

Notes: Percentages given in parentheses. Source of data is Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research unless noted otherwise below. Data from Harris Village not used owing to preferential collection of pinon. NAN data from Bruno (1988), does not include S room block data.

Key: TR = trace

in the roofs, probably considerably increased the expense—in terms of wood needs—of constructing of these large buildings.

This assessment of Old Town data is supported by construction-wood data from other sites in the Mimbres valley (see Table 11). Although these data derive from previous excavations in the valley and have various biases, they nonetheless suggest that more Douglas fir and Ponderosa pine were used downstream and at a lower elevation in the Mimbres River valley, particularly in larger rooms, regardless of time period. Indeed, there is no documented use of Douglas fir at sites like Galaz, Mattocks, Mitchell, and Janss closest to source areas, and only minor use at NAN Ranch and Montoya in the middle valley, but significant use at Old Town and Walsh in the lower valley, particularly in larger rooms.

If these data are representative, then one could conclude that the collection zone for construction wood was considerably larger for communities lower in the valley and thus farther from the forests. One can readily see, therefore, that Old Town residents living out in the desert would have had considerable incentive to reuse timbers from older buildings. Indeed, one would predict that timber reuse would be greater at sites at lower elevations. Perhaps this is one reason that we have nothing in the way of tree-ring dates after the A.D. 1120s, precisely the time when the Terminal Classic room block at Old Town was built. This may be the case at other lower-elevation Mimbres sites as well. We are particularly limited in our ability to assess this possibility because we have no samples from Classic contexts at Old Town.

## Floor Construction

For the most part, floors in excavated structures were of smoothed adobe some 2–5 cm thick, although some pit structures had only slightly smoothed tuff bedrock as floor. A few, such as communal pit structure Room A16, had adobe in the central portion but bedrock around the periphery. Whether it, too, originally had a thin adobe flooring that wore away and was not replaced is unknown but certainly plausible. In most pit structures, the bedrock floor was a few centimeters deeper in the center than around the edges. In surface pueblo rooms, however, floors were more nearly level, insofar as could be determined in partially or mostly pothunted contexts. In most cases where the floor-wall junction was undisturbed, the floor adobe was continuous with the wall plaster, both in the initial construction and in remodeling.

Based on our excavations, remodeling was not uncommon in surface pueblo rooms, and two or more floors were encountered in a number of rooms. This is true of both the Terminal Classic rooms in the northern part of Area A and in the Black Mountain phase rooms in Area C. Perhaps the most interesting instance of multiple floors is in Room A2, a Terminal Classic room. In addition to its original floor, this room had been remodeled four times, resulting in a series of five floors. This evidence for repeated remodeling is but part of the reason for arguing that the Terminal Classic occupation at Old Town was both fairly substantial and lengthy.

A few rooms in the Terminal Classic room block have flagstone floors with thin slabs of white Sugarlump rhyolite set in adobe. One of these rooms, A62, was probably built during the first construction episode, with additional examples in the later construction episodes.

In Room A112, the flagstone floor consists of closely placed rhyolite slabs of varying sizes and very small pieces set vertically in spaces where the flagstones could not be laid in contact with one another. This created an impressive solid stone floor complemented by large rhyolite slabs set vertically along the wall bases and extending below the floor for up to 20 cm. Most Mimbres archaeologists would likely attribute this kind of floor-wall base construction to a food storage function for this room, and indeed, this may well be the case. However, it is important to note that other contemporaneous, nearby rooms without flagstone floors also have slabs set vertically along the wall base. More important is the presence of a ventilator in this room (one was also present in adjacent Room A9), which would appear to be inconsistent with a food-storage use for the room. Thus, as is discussed in Chapter 7, the functional implications of flagstone flooring may differ slightly in some cases from what most Mimbres archaeologists have long assumed.

## The Possibility of Raised Floors

One of the more intriguing mysteries at Old Town is the possibility of raised floors like those present in various Hohokam sites. In their report on the Swarts Ruin, Cosgrove and Cosgrove (1932:Plate 54) illustrated several notched slabs that are virtually identical to those that apparently supported raised floors in Hohokam pit houses (e.g., Haury 1932). Some of the slabs illustrated by the Cosgroves are



Figure 54. Nels Nelson's 1920 photograph of notched slabs and other articles, perhaps from a room partially excavated by E. D. Osborn. Location within site is unknown (Image No. 1562; photograph by Nels Nelson, American Museum of Natural History Library).

actually from Old Town and were excavated from a Classic room in 1920 or perhaps the year before. Nels Nelson visited the site in 1920 and took a photograph of this partially dug masonry room (Figure 54; see Chapter 7 for further discussion). In the backdirt adjacent to the wall, these notched slabs can be clearly seen, as they appear to have been set up loosely in the backdirt for the photo. Unfortunately, there is no specific note on context.

Somewhat later, these same slabs were acquired by Eileen Alves, a prominent avocational archaeologist in El Paso and close friend of the Cosgroves. Eileen Alves also corresponded with Harold Gladwin at Gila Pueblo about the notched slabs in Mimbres sites and noted that local pothunters believed that these "cat stones" were grave markers because they had found them above subfloor burials. In my view, it is unlikely that there was any direct relationship between the two, but there is evidence that the notched slabs were set in the floor near or adjacent to walls, thus conveying an appearance of association

(see additional discussion in Chapter 7). Since the only digging in the room that Nelson photographed in 1920 was along the walls, the notched slabs must have come from near-wall context. Only one of the notched slabs we found during excavations at Old Town could be even tentatively linked to a near-wall context (Room A110). At the Swarts site, the Cosgroves found two notched slabs on the floor of Room 34, and there was one on the fallen roof of Room 72 (unpublished field notes on file at the Peabody Museum, Harvard University). Surely, relatively few have been found, and it is my belief that they most likely supported interior furniture, such as benches, shelving, etc., in Classic and/or Terminal Classic rooms. Most burials in such rooms were located along the walls, as were the notched stones, although presumably without any real association.

It is also possible that Old Town Room A112 had a raised floor supported by notched slabs. If it did, however, the presence of a ventilator along with the flagstone floor and slab-lined wall bases in that long,



narrow room is curious, assuming of course that all were present together in a functional group. To my knowledge, no similarly outfitted room has been found at any other Mimbres site. Perhaps we might consider that this particular room may have been built specially for interior drying of corn or other produce, and the ventilator might have been a critical part of the drying system.

There is also the interesting possibility of a raised floor in Three Circle phase pit structure Room B4. As discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, there is a relatively large number of postholes for each floor in this extensively remodeled room. On the later floor, clearly defined postmolds in several postholes indicate the use of relatively small posts about 5 cm in diameter. If all of the postholes held similar-sized or somewhat larger posts, they may, as a group, have been sufficient to support the flat roof, but the room would have had posts about every meter throughout. It is also possible that these postholes held short forked posts that supported a raised floor. Very similar arrangements of forked posts supporting raised floors have been found in several Hohokam pit houses (Whittlesey et al. 1997:502), the forked posts serving the same function as notched slabs in other structures. There was no hearth or even an ash deposit on the upper floor of Room B4, so if there had been a raised floor, it presumably extended throughout the room.

Room B9, a much larger, only partially excavated pit structure that is less well preserved owing to prehistoric disturbance could also have had a raised floor. The only possible evidence is the apparently large number of closely spaced postholes arrayed in rows. There presumably were three, and possibly four, rows of postholes roughly 1 m apart over the 41 m<sup>2</sup> of floor. Had these held roof supports, the room would have been difficult to move through. It is also worth noting that Room B9 is twice as long as it is wide, a ratio quite atypical for Mimbres sites but common in contemporaneous Hohokam structures. Elsewhere, Creel and Anyon (2003) have suggested that this room may actually have been built and used by Hohokam individuals.

## Floor Features

In virtually every room at Old Town, we found some type of floor feature. Most common are postholes, but hearths, small ash deposits, and burials are also fairly common. *Sipapus* and related sand piles, holes for ladder poles, and a few other features were rarely

encountered and are discussed as appropriate in the descriptions of individual rooms.

With the exception of the late hearth in Room A5, all of the hearths in pit structures are shallow, round or oval pits in bedrock; none is lined with adobe. The hearth in A5, a raised adobe basin, was relocated as part of remodeling (including the sealing of the extended entryway). We know little about hearths in the Terminal Classic rooms because of the extensive pothunter disturbance. However, the hearth in Room A7 is an oval, adobe-lined basin with pebbles around the rim. The hearths in Rooms A2 and A110 are similar but lack the pebbles. The few hearths that we excavated in the Black Mountain phase rooms were adobe-lined pits like those in Terminal Classic rooms but tended to be smaller.

The very large ash deposit located in the central portion of Room A110 has no known counterpart at Old Town, though it closely resembles an ash deposit in Room 91 at the NAN Ranch site (Burden 2001: Shafer 2003:49). The ash deposit in Room A110 was heavily disturbed by pothunting, but its size and shape could be clearly defined. There were smaller deposits distinguishable within the larger feature, and it is presumed that the mass of ash resulted from in situ fires.

As might be expected, subfloor burial pits appear to be numerous in some of the Terminal Classic rooms, but all have been at least partially disturbed by pothunters prior to our excavations. It is presumed that the adobe patches marking the filled burial pits were readily apparent before they were disturbed by pothunters. The very few subfloor burials found in pit structures and the Black Mountain phase rooms were easily recognized when the floors were exposed.

## Dedicatory Objects and Building Construction

In the course of the 1990 excavations of pit house Room B2, we found two of the large flaked stone bifaces, generally referred to as “hoes,” in the masonry south wall. Indeed, it was only because a portion of the back wall had slumped in prehistory, exposing these items on the edges of the still intact, unslumped wall that we found them. Each had been placed flat in the wall perpendicular to its axis, pointing inward. These were the first items encountered at Old Town that are now considered building dedicatory objects. The notion of dedicatory objects was only recently put forward in a formal publication by

Creel and Anyon (2003) in their discussion of Mimbres communal pit structures. A general overview of Mimbres sites, however, reveals that there is evidence for dedicatory objects beneath corners, in walls, in and beneath floors, and in the roofs of buildings. Examples from all these contexts have been found at Old Town, but we likely have a decidedly incomplete understanding of this phenomenon at Old Town because intact standing walls were generally left in place and pervasive pothunting has taken its toll of roof fall and subfloor contexts.

Best known are the items placed in the fabric of communal pit structure Room A16, evidently built about A.D. 874 or 875. As described in Chapter 6 and in Creel and Anyon (2003), objects placed in the roof were numerous and include shell bracelet fragments, broken quartz crystals, stone palette fragments, stone and shell beads and pendants, a stone bowl fragment, and a broken red-pigment grinding slab. These objects were primarily concentrated in the roof above the central floor features. In the floor, we found most of a red-pigment grinding slab, broken into several pieces and buried inverted and refitted in the floor adobe. But like most of the objects in the roof, this pigment-grinding slab was also put in the building fabric as a fragment as some pieces were clearly missing. Shell bracelet fragments and broken quartz crystals were found in the sand at the base of the central roof support posthole. Beneath the southwest corner we encountered the wings of a barn owl. We know little else about possible dedicatory objects in the wall of this building because the standing wall segments were generally left intact and, unfortunately, most of the fallen wall material was not screened.

Other notable instances of apparent dedicatory objects include the grooved maul beneath the wall of Room B6, the stone hoe in the hearth adobe of pit structure Room B11, a Three Circle phase kiva with coursed-adobe walls, and the small plain pinchpot in the east wall of Terminal Classic Room A9. In addition, there was a late Archaic/Paleoindian projectile point in the fallen west wall of kiva Room A83 and an unusually large amount of chalcedony in its roof adobe. Evidently, several large cores of chalcedony were placed in the roof adobe directly above the thatching and extensively fractured by the heat when this structure burned. Finally, a large calcite crystal that was probably, but not definitely, in the roof adobe of this same room was found.

The last item that might readily be considered a dedicatory object is the front leg and adjacent neck

of a dog that appears to have been placed in the fill of Feature A58, which is interpreted as the footing for a 5-m-long freestanding wall associated with Burial 18, an adult male. The bones from this portion of the dog were found in the fill between and around two of the large, vertically set slabs that formed the footing. Few of the bones were articulated when excavated, so it is not known if they were articulated at the time of construction and have since become disarticulated by rodents and other disturbances. As this feature was left mostly intact, the possible presence of other dedicatory objects is unknown.

## **Destruction Techniques**

Archaeologists working in the Mimbres area have long debated whether burned buildings were deliberately set on fire and destroyed. Evidence from the northern Southwest suggests that pit structures are difficult to burn, that accidental fires can be easily put out if caught quickly, and thus, that many, if not most, of the burned pit structures were intentionally destroyed. It is difficult to address this issue in the Terminal Classic and Black Mountain phase surface-pueblo room blocks at Old Town, but some of the pit structures were easier to assess.

In particular, the repeated incidences of burned pit structures with a roof that fell directly onto the floor, with no intervening fill, and walls that were laid over *en masse*, one at a time, on top of the fallen roof leads us to believe that these buildings were deliberately destroyed. The proposed scenario for destruction has a building burned, probably using introduced fuel like the mass of corn husks found in Room 52 at the NAN Ruin (Burden 2001:39; Shafer and Taylor 1986:47–48). First, the roof would fall onto the floor, followed immediately by the walls, which would have been pushed over one at a time, *en masse*, onto the fallen roof. If this scenario did indeed take place, the participation of several people would have been required for even the smaller structures and even more for the massive walls of Room A16. Creel (1999b) and Creel and Anyon (2003) have discussed the possibility that the corners of these buildings were abutted rather than bonded specifically to facilitate the clean laying over of each wall *en masse*; it is nonetheless possible, and perhaps even more probable, that the corners were in fact bonded, but cut at the time of destruction to permit the participants to lay them over *en masse*.

At Old Town, of the four buildings apparently so destroyed are the two large communal pit structures (A16 and A71) and the two small kivas (Rooms A83 and B11). A fifth, minimally known large communal pit structure (Room A67), also burned and has its roof directly on the floor and the fallen wall material on the roof, but too little has been excavated to know much more than this. Since Room A67 is round and has neither masonry nor coursed-adobe walls, it may be more difficult to determine if the walls were pushed over en masse onto the roof. More generally, as Creel and Anyon (2003) have demonstrated, it is likely that many, if not most, large communal pit structures in the Mimbres area were similarly destroyed. As discussed in Chapter 6, small kivas were also frequently burned, but, for the most part, it is unknown if their walls were pushed in.

Creel and Anyon (2003) have also discussed possible termination objects in large communal pit structures. Generally, these consist of complete objects on the floor, and pottery vessels are among the objects most consistently found in these contexts. In addition, two partial vessels were found on top of the fallen walls of Room A16: one was a very large, negative-painted, naturalistic Mimbres Black-on-white, Style II, bowl, and the other was a small, Three Circle phase corrugated pitcher that contained several lumps of wood charcoal. It is entirely possible that these were not associated with the destruction of Room A16, but very little time elapsed between destruction of the room and the deposition of these vessels. One can even imagine that the corrugated vessel contained coals or charcoal from the fire used to ignite Room A16.







## CHAPTER 5

# Domestic Pit Structures

Pit structures considered to have been domestic were encountered in all areas of the site on BLM property except in Area D below the cliff (Figures 55 and 56). Domestic pit structures were found in Areas A and C primarily during the course of investigation of surface pueblos, but relatively little attention was devoted to them in either portion of the site. In contrast, so far as could be learned, there was nothing but Late Pithouse period remains in Area B, and our investigations there were quite extensive. In fact, the work in Area B yielded some of the most important information from the entire project.

Before describing these pit houses, it is useful to provide an assessment of our sample. In Area B, as discussed below, we have identified and at least partially excavated seven pit structures and the one small surface room. These furnish much of our information on pre-A.D. 1000 occupation at Old Town, but it is important to note that additional, as-yet-uninvestigated, pit structures are present in Area B. In Area A, our excavations have encountered pit structures in virtually every unit, and remote sensing has suggested the presence of others. It is, however, critical to note again that most of our work in Area A has focused on surface architecture, and no systematic effort has been made to locate pit structures or even to excavate those identified. Moreover, remote sensing and excavation together have been used to investigate only a very small portion of Area A. If one were to project the findings across all of Area A, there are perhaps 200 or so pit structures present, not including the special purpose, large communal pit structures. These would include structures representing all of the Late Pithouse period and probably the Early Pithouse period, if not perhaps even earlier pit structures.

It is more difficult to guess the number of pit structures in Area C, primarily because investigations have been more limited there, but we did excavate one early pit house and found numerous storage pits that clearly seem to relate to pit house occupation. In addition, there are abundant Late Pithouse period ceramics in Area C, and in the more southerly portions, the surface ceramics are exclusively Alma Plain, suggesting that there may be more and/or earlier pit structures in that part of the site. We estimate that a minimum of 20 pit structures is present in Area C and perhaps considerably more.

Little is known of a concentration of artifacts and depressions on private property just north of the drainage on the north side of Area A. A brief examination revealed that the most readily identifiable occupation in this area dates to the Three Circle phase, but a more specific assessment is not possible at present. However, it is likely that the number of pit structures there is at least equivalent to that in Area C. Thus, in all areas that may have been considered their community by the prehistoric residents, at least 240 domestic pit structures were likely present. In our view, the number is probably substantially greater, perhaps even twice that, with most of them in Area A. Regardless of the actual count, however, the total number results from several centuries of habitation. Few of those identified can be dated more precisely than to phase.

More generally, most of the pit structures identified in Area A appear to date to the Three Circle phase, based on shape and other data. Indeed, virtually all of the pit structures found at the site to date are Three Circle phase in age. We cannot be sure how biased our sample is, but it is clear that the Three Circle phase community was substantial. On the other hand, the

# EXCAVATIONS AT THE OLD TOWN RUIN

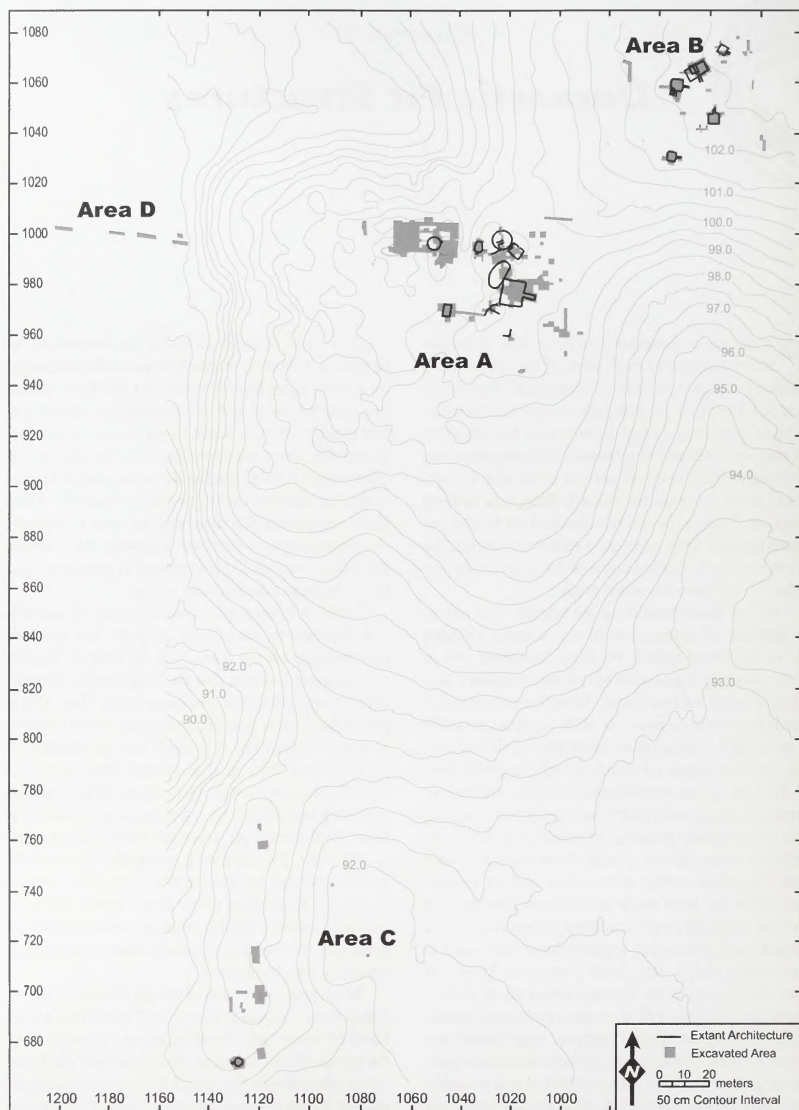


Figure 55. Map of Old Town with locations of investigated pit structures.



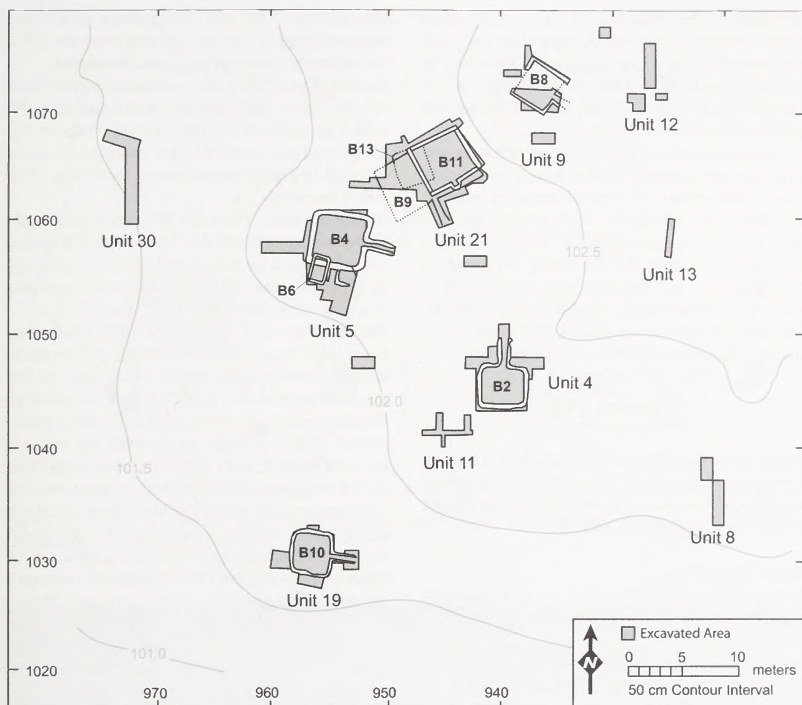


Figure 56. Map of Area B pit structures.

occurrence of earlier pottery types in various parts of Areas A and C suggests that earlier pit structures are more common than our findings indicate. Indeed, the presence of a large round communal pit structure likely reflects a substantial Early Pithouse period population living in numerous structures. Centuries of later occupation in the same places have destroyed portions of these earlier pit structures.

The pit structures found at Old Town generally reflect the well-known Mimbres-area architectural sequence discussed in Chapter 1. The people living at Old Town built the typical pole-and-adobe pit houses found at other Mimbres sites, and they built several pit houses with thick masonry walls comparable to those of the Classic period surface pueblo. In addition, we excavated communal pit structures

with coursed-adobe walls, the earliest roughly dated ca. A.D. 800. Thus, although the general Mimbres architectural sequence was followed at Old Town, there were also unexpected findings.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the principal means of dating pit structures at Old Town were tree-ring dating, archaeomagnetic dating, architectural style, and ceramic cross-dating. Particular effort was made to date both construction and destruction of individual buildings: tree-ring dating was used for the former and archaeomagnetic dating for the latter. Many hundreds of burned construction wood fragments were collected and submitted for tree-ring dating, but only a tiny fraction of these actually yielded dates (see Table 4). In most cases, however, archaeomagnetic dating of burned wall plaster was quite successful

(see Table 5). Archaeomagnetic dating of pit house hearths was rarely possible because most were simply unlined basins or pits in bedrock. Ceramics in various contexts offered less precise dating, and pit structure shape offered an even less precise, but still meaningful, method of dating.

In the remainder of this chapter, all of the domestic pit structures identified and at least partially excavated are described. They are presented in order by area of the site and then by room number. Because of its age and location in Area B, Room B6 is also included here despite the fact that it was a surface masonry room. Consistent with general practice, floor area was calculated exclusive of the lateral entryway. Summary information on architectural wood, where present, is presented in Table 10 in Chapter 4.

## **Room A5**

Room A5 is a well-preserved pit house buried beneath 1 m of late Three Circle phase and Classic period trash that in turn was built over by Terminal Classic pueblo rooms (Figures 57 and 58).

**Phase:** Three Circle

**Room shape and size:** Square; 3 m north-south by 3 m east-west

**Floor area:** 9 m<sup>2</sup>

**Portion excavated:** All except for the entryway

**Wall construction:** Above the bedrock cut, the walls are of pole-and-adobe construction; posts are arranged around the exterior of the structure (not all exposed). Four niches (Features A5-5–A5-8) are cut into the north and south walls, presumably to provide locations for support posts.

**Entry:** Originally a lateral entryway; at some point during the occupation of Room A5, the lateral entryway was sealed and a ceiling entry constructed for ladder access. Two holes with adjacent rocks apparently held the ladder poles.

**Entry ramp length:** Undetermined

**Entry ramp width:** ca. 50 cm

**Entry ramp orientation:** South

**Floor:** Thin adobe in central area, bedrock elsewhere.

**Hearth form and size:** Original is simple, represented by ash deposit in front of entryway. Later hearth is raised, oval basin, 40 cm north-south, 25 cm east-west, 8 cm deep.

**Other floor features:** None

**Floor assemblage:** Mano and deer metapodial

**Roof:** Although there is little data concerning the

construction of the roof, the presence of a ceiling entrance suggests that the roof was relatively flat, at least after the extended entryway was sealed.

**Remodeling:** During the occupation of the Room A5, the lateral entryway was sealed (partially disturbed by pothunting), and a ceiling entrance was constructed (see Figure 57). The hearth position also changed, probably accompanying the sealing of the lateral entryway.

**Abandonment:** There are few data regarding the abandonment of Room A5. There were few objects on the floor, and the lack of evidence for burning suggests that this structure was abandoned after removal of usable construction wood and other items.

**Dating:** Room A5 is dated to the Three Circle phase based on its square shape. Remodeling is presumed to have occurred in the late A.D. 900s, based on better-dated cases at the NAN Ranch site in which pit structure entryways were sealed and ceiling entries created. A later pit structure cut away the northeast corner of Room A, and a Terminal Classic Period room (A1) is stratigraphically above both pit structures, their floors separated by nearly 1 m of fill. In the small area of apparently undisturbed midden fill in Room A5, the latest ceramics in the lowest stratigraphic context (trash deposited on floor after abandonment) were early Mimbres Black-on-white, Style II, indicating that the room was abandoned and began filling with trash circa A.D. 880 to A.D. 980 (Shafer and Brewington 1995: Table 1). Together, the superimposed pit house, the depth of fill, and the ceramics in that fill suggest that Room A5 dates to some time circa A.D. 900.

**Postabandonment:** Subsequent to its abandonment, two structures, one Late Pithouse Period pit structure (unexcavated and not numbered) and one Terminal Classic surface structure (Room A1), were constructed above Room A5. The construction of the later pit structure (not otherwise investigated) cut away the northeast corner of Room A5 (see Figure 58). A considerable quantity of debris eventually accumulated in and over Room A5. At some point during this accumulation, an infant burial (Feature A5-22) was interred into the room fill in the southwest corner. The western edge of the room was damaged by modern bulldozing, which removed the west wall to just above the floor.

## **Room A10**

Room A10 is an extensively disturbed room located in the central portion of Area A. Unlike Room A5, no later architecture overlay it.

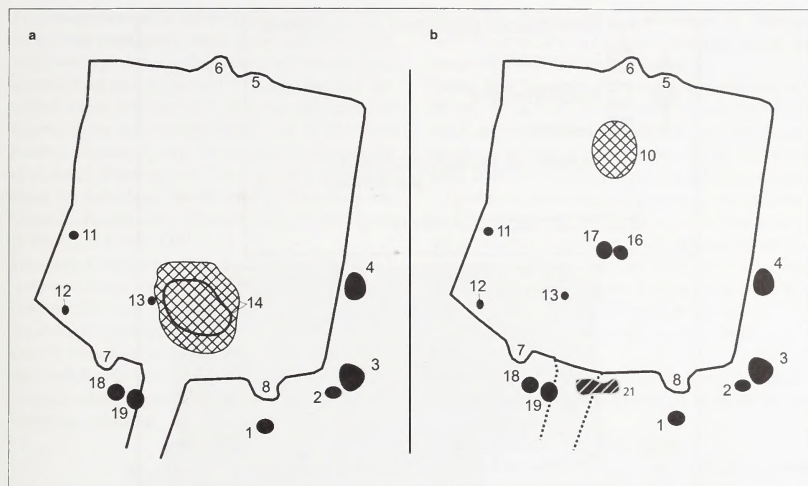


Figure 57. Room A5 plan: (a) lower floor; (b) upper floor. North is at top. Solid features are postholes; crosshatched features are hearths.

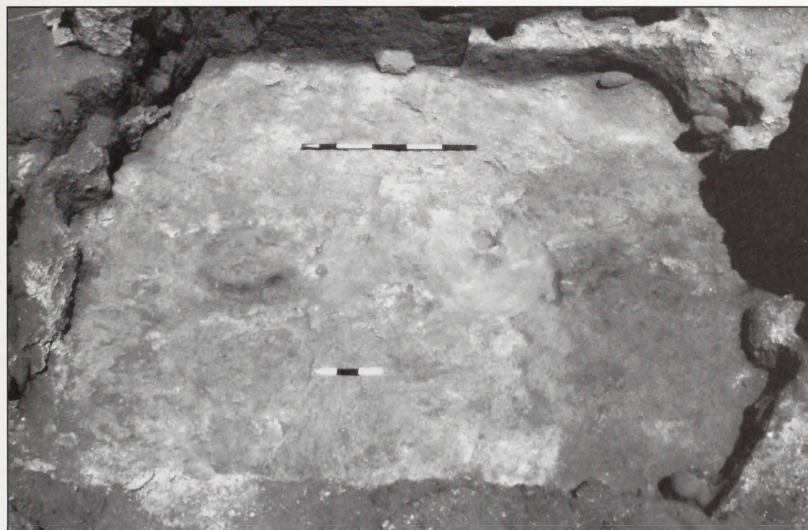


Figure 58. Photograph of the upper floor of Room A5. Sealed entryway is to the right, raised hearth at left center (meter scale; arrow points grid north).



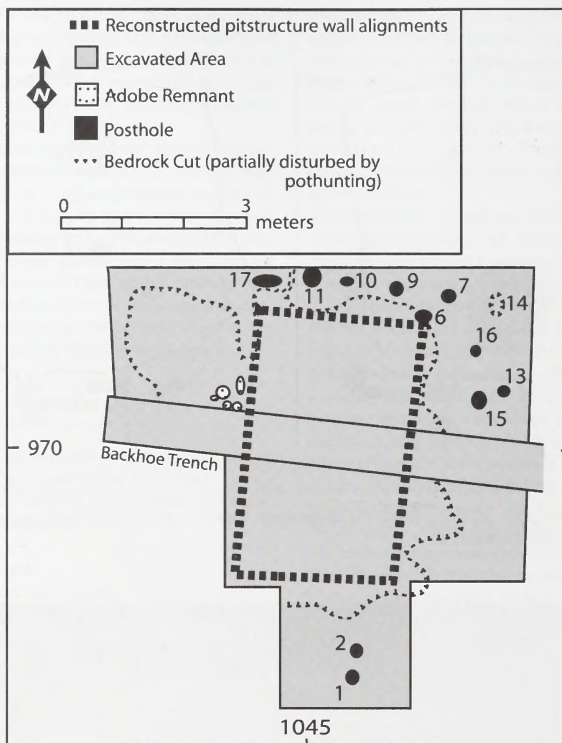


Figure 59. Plan of Room A10.

**Phase:** Three Circle

**Room shape and size:** Rectangular (Figure 59); original pit is ca. 4.75 m north-south by 2.60 m east-west, whereas the perimeter posthole alignments are projected at roughly 6 m north-south by 4.5 m east-west.

**Floor area:** 12.35 m<sup>2</sup>

**Portion excavated:** Almost all

**Wall construction:** Pole and adobe. This pit structure was originally dug some 30 cm into bedrock and evidently had alignments of wall postholes parallel to, and ca. 30–75 cm from, the pit edges. The excavations were not extensive enough to expose all of these alignments, and, in fact, they can only be inferred for the south and west sides at the present time.

**Entry:** Unknown

**Entry ramp length:** No data

**Entry ramp width:** No data

**Entry ramp orientation:** If present, probably east

**Floor:** Bedrock, so far as could be determined

**Hearth form and size:** None present; probably destroyed by Backhoe Trench 1

**Other floor features:** Posthole

**Floor assemblage:** None

**Roof:** No data

**Remodeling:** None recognizable

**Abandonment:** Presumed to have been abandoned without burning

**Dating:** Based on structure shape, this pit house is inferred to date to the Three Circle phase.

**Postabandonment:** In the northwest corner of Unit 7, west of the bedrock wall base in the northwest room A10, was a group of perhaps three or four disturbed burials (Features A10-4 and A10-19). Another disturbed burial (Feature A10-3) was in the northeast corner of the room immediately east of this same bedrock remnant. Lastly, the partially disturbed burial of an infant (Feature A10-8) was found in a small pit along the east edge of the Room A10. At some point, an adobe-mixing basin (Feature A10-12) was placed in the fill of Room A10.

**General Comments:** The excavations in Unit 7 were not extensive enough to expose all of this pit structure, but most of it was excavated. Unfortunately, all of Room A10 had been disturbed by a combination of prehistoric and pothunter activity, as well as our Backhoe Trench 1. Pothunters had dug into the bedrock edge, in places as far as some of the surrounding postholes.

## Room A12

This partially excavated pit house underlay Terminal Classic rooms in northern Area A (Figures 60 and 61). In general, it seems well preserved, although in places it has been disturbed by later prehistoric construction and burial activities as well as by pothunter digging.

**Phase:** Georgetown

**Room shape and size:** Round; original pit ca. 4.8 m in diameter

**Floor area:** approximately 18 m<sup>2</sup>

**Portion excavated:** Estimated 15 percent excavated; only that portion below Room A7 has been excavated to floor.

**Wall construction:** Presumed to have been pole and adobe above the 30-cm-deep pit, although no definite supporting evidence was found. There are a few postholes a few centimeters beyond the pit and entryway edge that may represent the wall.

**Entry:** Extended entryway

**Entry ramp length:** 0.7 m

**Entry ramp width:** 0.3 m. If the postholes along the south side of the entryway (dug into bedrock) indicate the location of the actual wall, then the enclosed entryway itself would have been about 1 m wide.

**Entry ramp orientation:** Very slightly north of east

**Floor:** Adobe in some places; bedrock elsewhere

**Hearth form and size:** None specifically identified as such in excavated portion, but there is a concentration

of ash and charcoal of undetermined size (Feature A12-1) apparently on the floor (partially beneath the footing for the west wall of Room A7).

**Other floor features:** Four postholes (Features A7-29, A7-32–A7-34). Feature A7-30 consists of two small pits immediately adjacent to one another, one of which contained infant bones. Given that all of these features were detected only in the floor of Room A12 and not above suggests that they are associated with it (though the fill above was disturbed both by the prehistoric digging of burial pits and pothunter digging). Similarly, they are at significantly lower elevations than the postholes believed to be associated with overlying Terminal Classic Room A7.

**Floor assemblage:** None in excavated area

**Roof:** No data

**Remodeling:** None recognized in excavated area

**Abandonment:** Presumed to have been abandoned without burning

**Dating:** Based on structure shape

**Postabandonment:** Some 75 cm of trash accumulated above the floor of this room prior to construction of Terminal Classic Room A7, with nearly 60 cm of trash immediately outside of the pit structure. The latest ceramics in this trash were early Terminal Classic, so the trash evidently accumulated over a period of centuries. Sometime ca. A.D. 1130, the suite of Terminal Classic rooms including A7 and A9 was built, followed by the addition of Room A11 to the west. Most, if not all, of the walls for these rooms have deep footings in trenches that reached underlying bedrock, and these disturbed existing trash deposits and perhaps pit structures. Postholes, burial pits, and other features dug from the floors of these rooms also impacted the fill of Room A12 to a varying extent.

**General Comments:** Feature A7-26, a large, circular storage pit, overlaps Room A12 (see Figure 61), but owing to the placement of a presumed Terminal Classic burial at the point of overlap, we could not determine if A12 predated or postdated the storage pit. However, the apparent deliberate filling of A7-26 with pulverized bedrock and the presence of a few Three Circle phase sherds in this fill suggests that this pit postdated Room A12.

## Room A47

Because of the small extent of excavations in Unit 31 and later construction of pit house Room A49 (Figures 62 and 63), relatively little is known about this pit house.

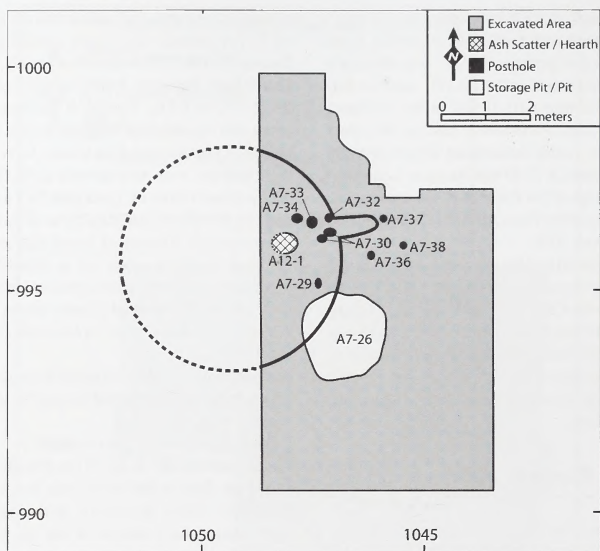


Figure 60. Plan of Room A12 and storage pit Feature A7-26.



Figure 61. Photograph of Feature A7-26, a storage pit (left side of photograph) and Room A12 (with meter scale and north arrow) in bedrock below Room A7.



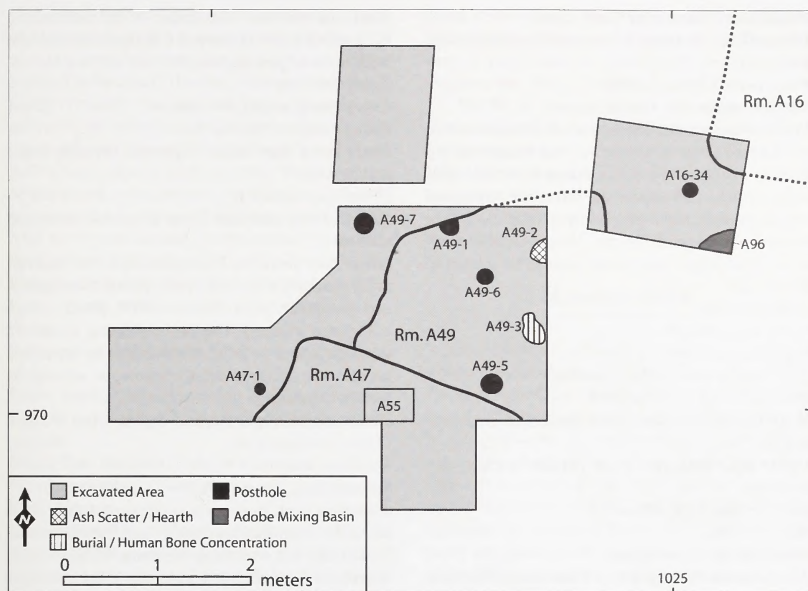


Figure 62. Plan of A47 and A49 including corner in Unit 22.



Figure 63. Excavated portions of Rooms A47 and A49 (meter scale; arrow points grid north).

**Phase:** San Francisco or Three Circle

**Room shape and size:** Rectangular or square; size unknown

**Floor area:** Undetermined

**Portion excavated:** Undetermined

**Wall construction:** The nature of the walls above the bedrock cut is unknown, but there was no evidence of masonry. It is presumed that the walls were of pole and adobe, an inference supported by the presence of a possible posthole ca. 10 cm beyond the edge of the pit. However, this posthole, if it really is one, could instead be related to Room A49.

**Entry:** No data

**Entry ramp length:** No data

**Entry ramp width:** No data

**Entry ramp orientation:** No data

**Floor:** Thin adobe on bedrock

**Hearth form and size:** None present in excavated portion

**Other floor features:** None present in excavated portion

**Floor assemblage:** None

**Roof:** No data

**Remodeling:** None evident

**Abandonment:** There were no artifacts on the floor, nor was there evidence of burning. It is presumed that this structure was abandoned and allowed to decay, probably after usable construction timber had been removed.

**Dating:** Room A47 is dated to the San Francisco or Three Circle phase based solely on its rectangular shape.

**Postabandonment:** Subsequent to abandonment, pit structure Room A49 was constructed partially overlapping A47. The construction of the later pit structure removed all remnants of A47 above floor level except on the west edge.

## Room A49

As is the case with underlying Room A47, this pit house is not particularly well known. However, as a result of the exposure of nearby Room A16's south-west corner in Unit 22, the shape of Room A49 and one dimension were determined (see Figures 62 and 63).

**Phase:** Probably Three Circle

**Room shape and size:** Rectangular; 2.4 m east-west and at least that north-south

**Floor area:** At least 5.7 m<sup>2</sup>

**Wall construction:** The nature of the walls above the bedrock cut is unknown. It is presumed that the walls were of pole and adobe.

**Entry:** No data

**Entry ramp length:** No data

**Entry ramp width:** No data

**Entry ramp orientation:** If present, probably either east or west.

**Floor:** Thin adobe

**Hearth form and size:** None present in excavated portion

**Other floor features:** Features include one small pit (only partially exposed), three possible postholes, and one infant burial (Feature A49-3, Burial 15; no associated objects). The pit containing Burial 15 was not sealed over by floor adobe, so interment presumably occurred shortly before, or subsequent to, abandonment.

**Floor assemblage:** Several sherds from a Three Circle Corrugated jar

**Roof:** No data

**Remodeling:** None evident

**Abandonment:** In the excavated portion, there were no artifacts on the floor other than the corrugated jar sherds, nor was there evidence of burning. It is presumed that this structure was abandoned and allowed to decay, probably after usable construction timber was removed.

**Dating:** Room A49 is dated to the Three Circle phase based on its rectangular shape and the Three Circle Corrugated jar sherds lying on the floor.

**Postabandonment:** Subsequent to its abandonment, Room A49 was covered by the large mass of fill that covered nearby communal pit structure Room A16 and adjacent earlier pit structures.

## Room A59

Identified during testing of the deep deposits in Unit 32, Room A59 was only minimally exposed (see Figure 39) and is poorly known.

**Phase:** Probably Three Circle

**Room shape and size:** Rectangular; 3.7 m east-west, north-south dimension unknown but is projected at roughly 4 m based on the presumption that the entryway has been identified and was placed in the middle of the east wall.

**Floor area:** At least 14.8 m<sup>2</sup>

**Portion excavated:** Very little of this pit structure has been excavated.

**Wall construction:** The presence of a few postholes just beyond the bedrock cut suggests that the walls were of pole and adobe, but too few of these have been exposed to be certain that they relate to this room.

**Entry:** Probably extended entryway. The only evidence for an extended entryway is a 90-cm-wide trench dug into the well-defined roof fall of Room A67, a large communal pit structure. The orientation of this trench is consistent with that of an entryway perpendicular to the projected east wall of Room A59, but it is not currently known if this was actually the entryway for Room A59.

**Entry ramp length:** If correctly identified, ca. 2.5 m

**Entry ramp width:** If correctly identified, ca. 90 cm

**Entry ramp orientation:** Apparently slightly north of east

**Floor:** Adobe that rolled up the bedrock pit edge

**Hearth form and size:** None present in excavated portion

**Other floor features:** None in excavated portion

**Floor assemblage:** None known

**Roof:** No data

**Remodeling:** The southeast corner had a thick adobe plaster applied against two semicircular cuts in bedrock that are interpreted as postholes. This plaster overlay the original floor and wall plaster, indicating a remodeling episode.

**Abandonment:** It is presumed that this structure was abandoned and allowed to decay, probably after usable construction timber was removed.

**Dating:** Room A59 is dated to the Three Circle phase based on its rectangular shape.

**Postabandonment:** Subsequent to its abandonment, Room A59 was covered by a complex series of deposits, including the Feature A51/52 platform and the large mass of fill that covered nearby communal pit structures Rooms A16, A67, and A71.

## Room A84

The designation "Room A84" was assigned to an area of apparent adobe floor with possible remnants of wall in the western portion of Unit 32 (see Figure 39). In fact, this possible pit structure extends underneath the east wall of surface pueblo Room A1 (it is not the same pit structure that intruded into A5's northeast corner). Too little of this area has been excavated to be certain that A84 is truly a pit structure, so this identification is tentative. This apparent adobe floor extends ca. 3.5 m east-west, but little is known of its

north-south extent. One posthole and one shallow, basin-shaped pit appear to be associated. The presence of much charcoal immediately above the floor suggests that this pit structure burned.

The 50 cm or so of fill above the apparent adobe floor designated as Room A84 contained Three Circle phase (and earlier) ceramics, from which we infer that A84 dates to the Three Circle phase. This is consistent with nearby pit structures A59 and A86, both of which are at least partially underneath the same deposits.

## Room A86

Room A86 is a tentatively identified pit structure in the western portion of Unit 32 (see Figure 39). Because so little of it has been excavated, there are no data on size or orientation. Room A86 appears to be rectangular and was dug into bedrock some 30 cm. The edges of the pit are not as sharply defined as other pit structures at Old Town, and the southeast corner is projected to have been in the fill of earlier communal pit structure Room A71. If we have correctly interpreted the few exposures, the east wall was at least 3.5 m long, but only one corner has so far been located. No floor features were found, and the building appears to have been filled with Three Circle phase debris. Debris continued to accumulate above Room A86 into the Classic phase. Its rectangular shape and the Three Circle phase ceramics in the fill above, as well as within, the structure fill suggest that Room A86 dates to the Three Circle phase.

## Room A120

During the summer of 2003, a magnetometer survey in eastern Area A resulted in the identification of a large anomaly that was tested by a small 3-m<sup>2</sup> excavation designated Unit 35 (see Figures 46 and 47). This unit barely caught the southeast corner of a rectangular pit structure, Room A120. It is not clear if the magnetic anomaly represents Room 120, but if it does, the size of the anomaly suggests a large pit structure.

The Unit 35 excavations were too limited to reveal much about Room A120, but the structure was dug into bedrock some 30 cm. No plaster or floor adobe was present in the small exposure in Unit 35. However, there are a few postholes just beyond the edge of the pit that may have been for wall posts. No wood remained in any of these.



## Other Pit Structures in Area A

In the course of our investigations in Area A, we frequently encountered areas of deeper bedrock that probably represent the locations of pit structures (see Table 3). Relatively few were investigated to any appreciable extent, so our knowledge of them is quite limited. However, all such pit structures, even partially exposed, were assigned room numbers and documented to the extent possible. It is likely that the bedrock cut found underneath the remnants of Room A2's floors adjacent to the bulldozer trench in fact represents the edge of a pit structure, and if the posthole along the edge of this cut is related, the structure probably had a pole-and-adobe superstructure. Most of it was presumably destroyed by the bulldozing.

## Room B2

Room B2 was the first pit structure investigated in Area B and, because of the mounded deposits, was first thought to represent a much later adobe surface room. It is well preserved and was fully excavated (Figures 64 and 65).

**Phase:** Three Circle

**Room shape and size:** Rectangular, 3 m north-south by 4 m east-west

**Floor area:** 12 m<sup>2</sup>

**Wall construction:** Masonry with tuff slabs set in adobe; interior walls plastered. The pit for Room B2 is approximately 75 cm deep, and the masonry was set on the pit edge. The south wall of the room contains an air vent or window at ground level that had been sealed with horizontally laid slabs. The existence of the vent was revealed by the collapse of the wall around the vent. Located in the approximate center of the south wall and 30 cm above the floor, the vent is approximately 50 cm wide and high. On either side of and slightly below the vent, flaked stone hoes (Figure 66) had been placed in the masonry wall, presumably during construction. The collapse of the central portion of this wall exposed the two hoes. Another possible wall opening, in the east wall in the northeast corner, is defined by a 30-cm gap in the masonry wall filled with a dark adobe.

**Entry:** The lateral entryway extends about 2.5 m to the north, with a roughly level floor and a single step at each end. The step at the northern end of the entryway was replastered with adobe at least once and possibly twice. Two unusually large boulders flank the exit of entryway and were incorporated into the wall of the entryway (see Figure 64); they presumably served to stabilize the entryway walls. Portions of the adobe floor north of these stones exhibit evidence of burning.

**Entry ramp length:** 2.5 m

**Entry ramp width:** 55–70 cm

**Entry ramp orientation:** North

**Floor:** Most of the floor is well-worn bedrock; however, portions of adobe flooring beneath the collapsed vent are well preserved and provide evidence for the application of two layers of adobe.

**Hearth form and size:** Shallow, oval basin in bedrock floor, 40 cm north-south by 25 cm east-west by 8 cm deep

**Other floor features:** Seven definite postholes, and possibly four more, were discovered in the floor of the room. The definite postholes extend into the bedrock beneath the floor adobe and have well-smoothed sides. On each side of the room adjacent to the wall, there is a large slab that seems to have been used in the room.

**Floor assemblage:** None

**Roof:** Room B2 had a thatched roof covered by adobe; its vigas and *latillas* were supported by several posts, as indicated by the numerous postholes.

**Remodeling:** Floor replastered once; entryway floor replastered at least twice

**Abandonment:** No usable items left in room, so abandonment is believed to have been deliberate.

**Dating:** An archaeomagnetic sample (see Table 5) was recovered from the burned wall plaster, yielding a date range of A.D. 900–950 for the burning. The meager charred wood fragments recovered were submitted for tree-ring dating but did not yield a date. The latest identifiable ceramics found in the construction debris are Mimbres Black-on-white, Style II, suggesting a construction date in the late A.D. 800s or early A.D. 900s.

**Postabandonment:** Room B2 appears to have been allowed to decay after abandonment as indicated by the presence of 5 cm of finely laminated deposits on the floor, presumably washed off the wall plaster. The pit structure was subsequently burned, but apparently only after most usable construction wood had been removed. The central portion of the south wall slumped down to floor level.

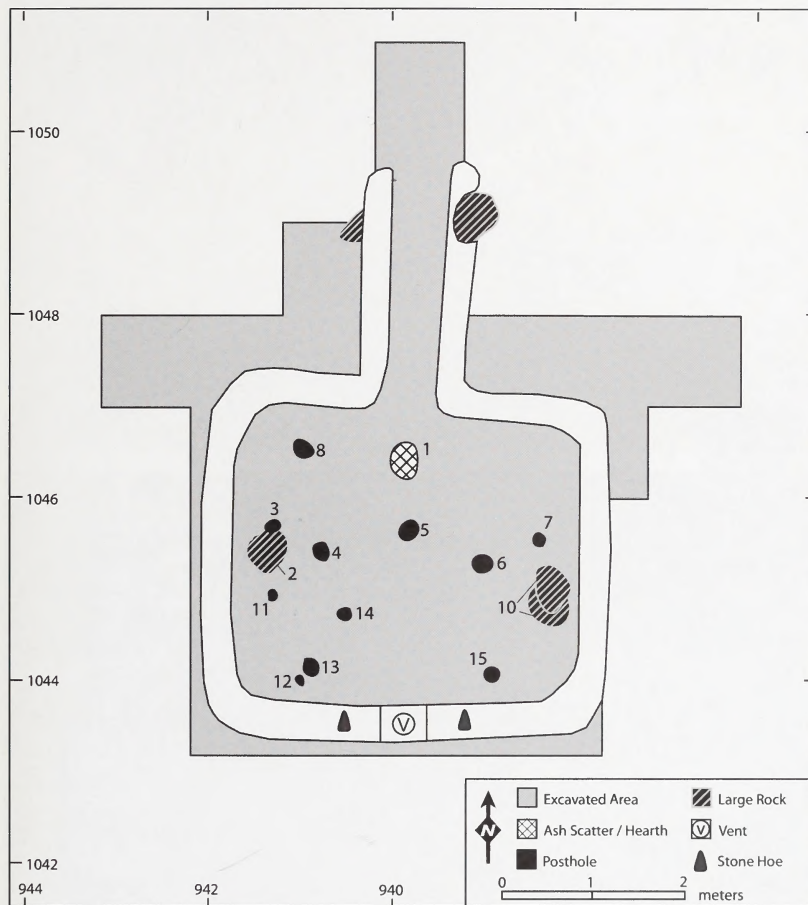


Figure 64. Plan of Room B2 in Unit 4.

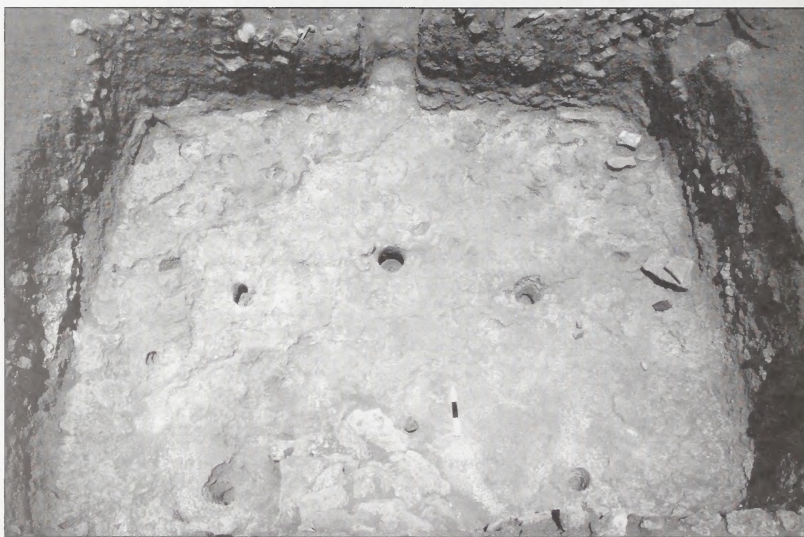
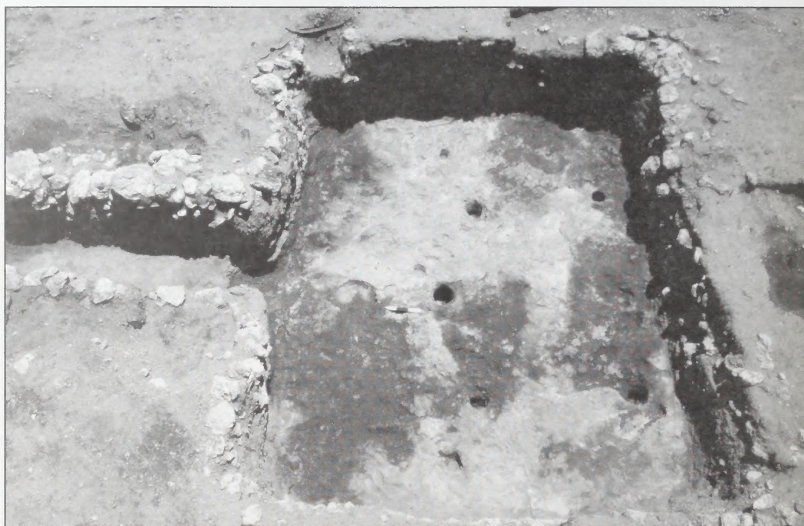


Figure 65. Room B2 fully excavated (*top*) and excavated except for slumped section of south wall (*bottom*) (arrow is 30 cm long and points grid north).



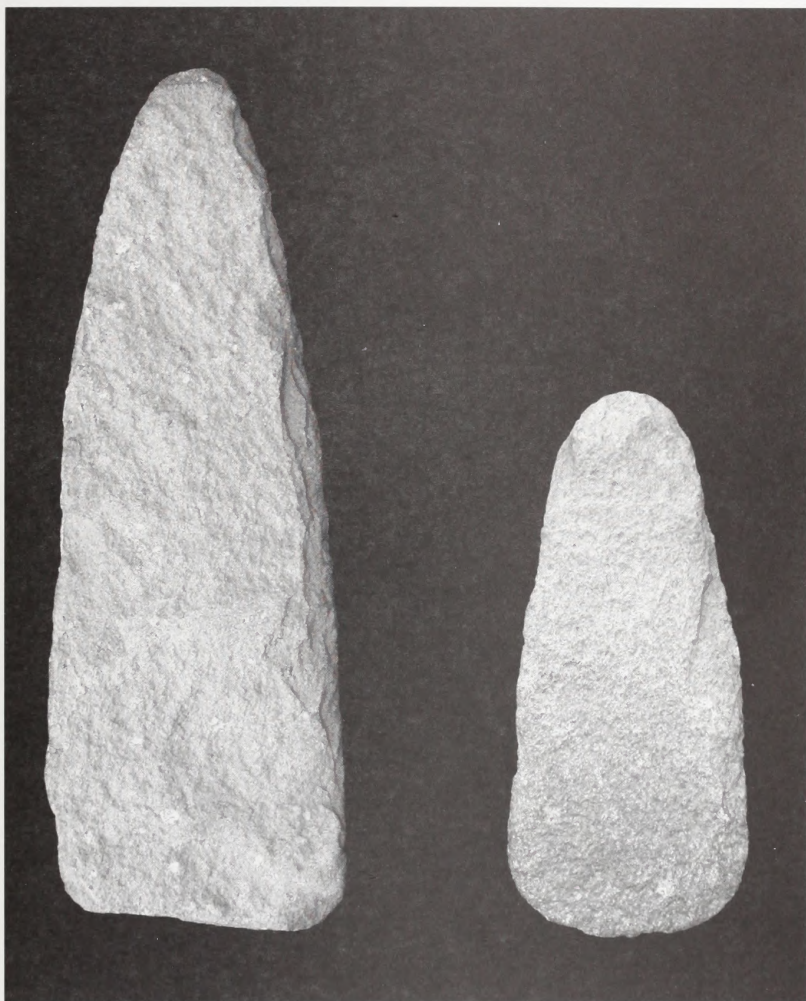


Figure 66. "Hoes" from south wall of Room B2.

## Room B4

Located on the west side of the courtyard, Room B4 (Figures 67–73) is a rectangular pit house dated to the Three Circle phase. A small surface room, designated as Room B6, was constructed above the southwest corner of B4 after the pit structure burned. An area in the northwest corner of Room B4 is believed to be the location of a test excavation by the Mimbres Foundation in 1975.

**Phase:** Three Circle

**Room shape and size:** Square; 4.2 m north-south by 4.2 m east-west

**Floor area:** 17.6 m<sup>2</sup>

**Wall construction:** The pit for this structure was excavated about 50 cm deep into the tuff bedrock, placing the floor about 1 m below modern ground surface. The masonry walls are constructed mainly of large tuff slabs set in adobe mortar above the bedrock cut. Fragments of ground stone implements were also used as construction materials. The interior surface of the wall is covered with adobe plaster, which rolled down onto the floor. The eastern wall is intact to a height of 10 cm above the bedrock and 60 cm above the pit house floor. The eastern wall also has two layers of plaster on the interior.

**Entry:** Room B4 has two entryways. The earliest was located in the south wall and was later sealed when an entryway was constructed in the east wall (see Figure 68, left). The south entry is approximately 50 cm wide, extends about 2 m from the south wall, and ends at Feature B7, an extramural activity area. The entryway was constructed with pole-and-adobe walls above an approximately 25-cm-high masonry base. Four floors are present, and the entryway had been resurfaced three times. The lowest is burned, evidently from a fire in the room, and ends in a step at the room entrance. The two floors above this one appear to have abutted this step. The fourth floor covers this step, but adds a new step consisting of slabs, set in adobe, rising a few centimeters above the floor of the room. When the southern entryway was sealed, the portion of the entryway walls adjoining the south wall of the room was removed, presumably in order to make a more durable bond between the masonry seal and the existing wall. Sealing was accomplished by placing a large flat slab horizontally on the floor at the base of the entryway, which was packed on the sides with adobe

and smaller rocks. The remaining space above this base was filled with horizontal layers of flat-laid masonry in adobe.

The eastern entryway is approximately 3 m long (see Figure 68, right); however, because only the interior of the entryway was excavated, details concerning its construction and wall width are uncertain (although the walls of the entryway appear to be of masonry construction). There is a step, rising 20–25 cm, in the entryway about 50 cm from its opening into the room. Beyond this step, the floor of the entryway slopes up slightly to a final low step, approximately 3 cm high, leading to the outside. Part of the floor of the east entryway is bedrock, suggesting that it had only one floor.

**Entry ramp length:** Earlier (south), 2 m; later (east), 3 m

**Entry ramp width:** Earlier (south), 50 cm; later (east), 45 cm

**Entry ramp orientation:** Earlier, south; later, east

**Floor:** At the time of destruction, the floor of most of the room was bedrock; however, two distinct layers of adobe are definable in the southwestern quadrant of the room. Since this floor adobe covered some of the postholes believed to relate to the earlier use of the room, it is presumed to have been associated with the sealing of the southern entryway and construction of the eastern entryway.

**Hearth form and size:** Hearth, when south entryway was in use, consisted of a circular ash scatter 95 cm north-south by 90 cm east-west. No hearth was identified in remodeled structure.

**Other floor features:** Twenty-four definite, two probable postholes, and one possible posthole are present (see description of roof below). Some of these had clearly defined postmolds within the hole dug into bedrock; the postmolds are generally about 5 cm in diameter. Seventeen of the postholes have been tentatively associated with either the earlier or later floor (see Table 5). A river cobble with green pigment (Feature B4-4) was set into the adobe of the uppermost floor near the southwest corner of the room.

**Floor assemblage:** Lying directly on the upper floor, concentrated in the northeast quadrant of the room, was a thin layer of charred grass stems believed to represent grass mats. Several vessels were on the floor: two Three Circle Neck Corrugated ollas, an El Paso Brown jar, an untyped painted olla, and a small plain ware bowl (see Figure 73) (most of these could not be reconstructed enough for photography due in part to burning). Part of a Mimbres Black-on-white,

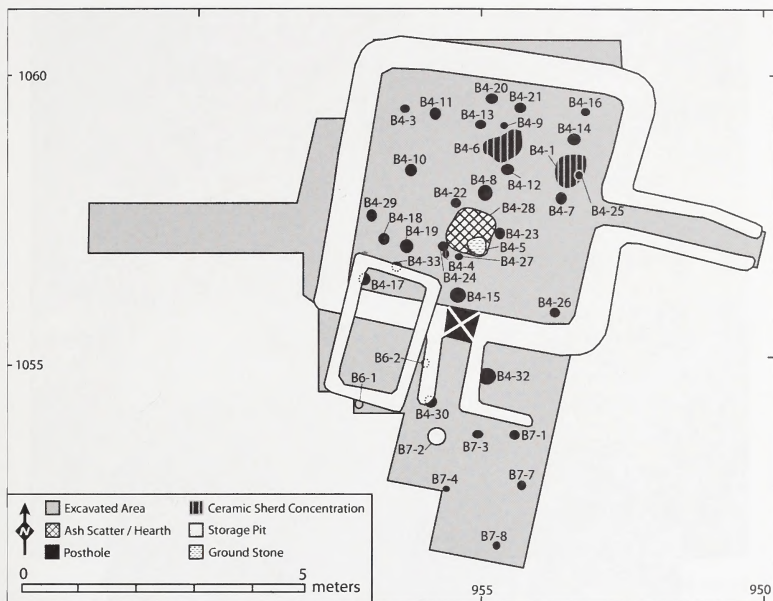


Figure 67. Plan of Unit 5 excavations and Rooms B4 and B6.

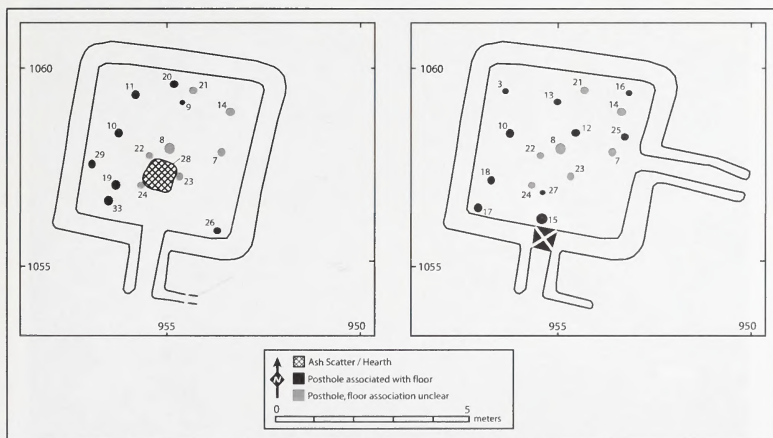


Figure 68. Plan of original Room B4 (left) and plan of remodeled Room B4 with entryway relocated to east side (right).





Figure 69. Overhead photograph of Room B4. Entryway at left is to the east; south entryway not yet excavated.



Figure 70. Original entryway, bottom, and extramural surface of Room B4; 30 cm arrow points north.



Figure 71. Photograph of south wall of Room B4 with wall plaster removed, showing sealed entryway.



Figure 72. An example of a posthole and postmold in the floor of Room B4.



Figure 73. A partially reconstructed plain bowl from the floor of Room B4.

Style I, bowl was on the floor, as was a metate south of the center post.

**Roof:** Room B4 had a roof constructed in typical Mimbres fashion, with adobe over thatch that lay on secondary beams. Burned roof fall indicates that the roof adobe was approximately 10 cm thick. Initially, it appears to have been supported by posts arranged in three east-west lines of three posts each; however, during remodeling at least some postholes were filled and new postholes dug, resulting in three north-south lines of four poles. Based on postmold diameters and the remnant of one post, the roof support posts were 5–6 cm in diameter. Given the small diameter of these posts and what must have been a heavy roof, it seems likely that the walls and vigas bore much of the weight. If so, it is possible that many of the postholes in the remodeled structure held supports for a raised floor, much like those found in Hohokam sites (Haury 1932). Several slabs recovered near the east entrance are probably the remains of a ceiling-vent cover or lining.

**Extramural area associated with the south entryway:** Adjacent to the southern entryway of Room B4 is a partially investigated extramural activity area evidently related to the use of that entrance; it was designated as Feature B7. Its adobe surface shows considerable signs of use, having been resurfaced four times. The presence of several postholes suggests that this area may have been roofed. A short wall extending east from the east wall of the pit house entryway at least to the excavation edge indicates that Feature B7 was associated with Room B4. All five adobe surfaces or floors are best defined near this wall remnant, and Floors 1, 3, and 4 could clearly be seen to roll up onto it. Examination revealed that the Feature B7 floors were stratigraphically above the wall adobe and plaster at the end of the south entryway of Room B4 and therefore could not pre-date Room B4. Because the floors extend around but not over the entryway, it is probable that Feature B7 also does not postdate the south entryway of Room B4. Therefore, all evidence indicates that the use of Feature B7 was contemporaneous with the use of the southern entryway of Room B4.

The earliest floors (3, 4, and 5) extended at least 1.5 m south and east of the entryway. Floors 1, 3, and 4 extend up onto the wall on the north side of Feature B7. Floor 3 is especially compact and distinct and is fire hardened in the immediate vicinity of Room B4. Floor 2 is also burned, and the fill above it contained occasional burned thatch and wood charcoal. The second floor could not be traced as far as the lower floors. The uppermost floor (Floor 1) is

the least well preserved but is distinct from Floor 2. It extends slightly upward onto the wall on the north side of Feature B7. The floors do not extend to the west beyond a group of rocks that are aligned with the west wall of the southern entryway to Room B4. Four probable postholes were discovered across Feature B7, originating in different floors. Features B7-7 and B7-8 both originate in Floor 5. Feature B7-3 originates in Floor 3. Two other postholes, Features B7-1 and B7-4, are located in the fill above all of the floors, and probably postdate Feature B7. It could not be determined if these postholes relate to a *ramada* on the south side of Room B4, built after south entryway was demolished, or if they relate to Room B6. Feature B7-2, a pit that extends through all five floors, also postdates Feature B7.

**Remodeling:** As noted previously, Room B4 was extensively remodeled. The southern entryway was resurfaced three times and finally sealed. The accompanying extramural surface, Feature B7 (see below), was also extensively remodeled. After the southern entryway was sealed, a new entryway was constructed into the east wall (see Figure 68, left and right). In the southwest corner of the structure, some postholes present in the earlier floor were covered over during the application of the later floor, indicating that during the construction of the eastern entryway, many, if not all, of the roof supports were replaced.

**Abandonment:** Room B4 appears to have been recently abandoned at the time of its destruction because there was little in the way of apparently usable objects on the floor (only a metate and one small bowl). There was no wash on the floor, and the amount of wood charcoal there indicates that at least some of the roof supports were in place at the time of destruction.

**Dating:** Unfortunately, none of the hundreds of charred fragments of architectural wood submitted for possible dating has yielded a tree-ring date, despite the fact that many of them are piñon and ponderosa pine. Archaeomagnetic samples (see Table 5) collected from the burned plaster of the west wall and floor of the southern entryway yielded a date range of A.D. 830–915 for an early, but not overly destructive, fire in this structure. Samples collected from the burned plaster interiors of the north, east and west walls of the room yielded a date range of A.D. 900–925 for the final burning (see Table 5). These date ranges imply that Room B4 was constructed around A.D. 900, perhaps in the late A.D. 800s, and was destroyed by fire by A.D. 925.

**Postabandonment:** Some time after Room B4 burned, Room B6 was constructed above the south-



west corner of Room B4. A concentration of rabbit bones was discovered during excavation in the pit house fill above the roof fall, evidently deposited as debris.

## Room B6

Room B6 is a small, poorly preserved surface structure located above the southwest corner of Room B4 (Figures 74 and 75; see Figure 67). Although the construction method of its walls varied somewhat, it appears generally to have been a masonry structure.

**Phase:** Three Circle

**Room shape and size:** Rectangular; 1.95 m north-south by 1 m east-west

**Floor area:** 2 m<sup>2</sup>

**Wall construction:** During the construction of Room B6, the western 1.5–2 m of the south wall of Room B4 was removed to bedrock. The east wall of Room B6 incorporates a portion of the wall of Room B4 such that the two walls appear to be bonded. The effort to bond the two was evidently intended to stabilize the thin east wall of Room B6. The north and east walls are approximately 20 cm thick and skillfully constructed of small slabs set horizontally in adobe (see Figure 74). A flaked stone hoe was found on top of the east wall remnant (see Figure 75) and may have been built into the wall, as was the case with two hoes in nearby Room B2. The west end of the north wall is supported by a slab set vertically against the west wall of Room B4, and the east end of the north wall is supported by large rocks set in the roof fall of Room B4. Where the two rooms overlap, the walls of Room B6 were constructed on approximately 4 cm of fill above the roof fall of Room B4 (see Figure 74). A grooved maul and a flaked-stone palette-like artifact were recovered from beneath the north wall, resting on the roof fall of Room B4. These artifacts are believed to have been placed there as part of construction, perhaps as offerings (see Figure 75). The west wall is very poorly preserved but appears to have been constructed of irregularly spaced rocks and very small amounts of adobe. Because all that remains of the south wall is the raised adobe of the wall base, the method of construction could not be determined. A posthole (Feature B6-1), approximately 12 cm in diameter and 31 cm deep, is located in the south wall 64 cm from the southeast corner and may indicate jacal construction or may relate to a wall opening. It may even postdate Room B6.

**Entry:** Means of access unknown

**Floor:** The poorly preserved floor is located approximately 50 cm below the current ground surface and consists of gravelly adobe applied in a single layer over bedrock.

**Hearth form and size:** None present

**Other floor features:** None

**Floor assemblage:** None

**Roof:** No data

**Remodeling:** None evident

**Abandonment:** There is no evidence for the burning of Room B6. Although some burned wall plaster and roof material were recovered from the fill, this could easily have been from Room B4.

**Dating:** No chronometric dates were recovered from this room; however, it was constructed after the destruction of Room B4—that is, after ca. A.D. 925. The lack of wash or wall fall in Room B4 below the north wall and the north section of the east wall of Room B6 suggests that Room B6 was built soon after the destruction of Room B4. If this were the case, then Room B6 would have been built soon after ca. A.D. 925.

**Postabandonment:** Room B6 was apparently allowed to collapse after it was abandoned, although the lack of identifiable roof material may indicate that such materials were removed from the structure after abandonment.

## Room B8

Room B8 is a rectangular pit structure located at the northeast corner of Area B (Figures 76 and 77). Although only the southern portion (42 percent of the projected floor area) was excavated, a large amount of information has been recovered.

**Phase:** Three Circle

**Room shape and size:** Square; 3.5 m north-south by 3.5 m east-west

**Depth of Pit into Bedrock:** 60 cm

**Floor area:** 12 m<sup>2</sup>

**Wall construction:** The walls of Room B8 are constructed of masonry, with stones ranging in size from 10-cm cobbles to medium-sized slabs 35–40 cm across and 4–10 cm thick. The walls are about 50 cm thick at their present highest point, and the interior is covered with a layer of adobe plaster, which rolled down onto the floor. So far as is presently known, the masonry walls rested on and were flush with the bedrock cut.

**Entry:** Only the roomward opening of the ramp entryway was excavated, but it is clear that the entryway

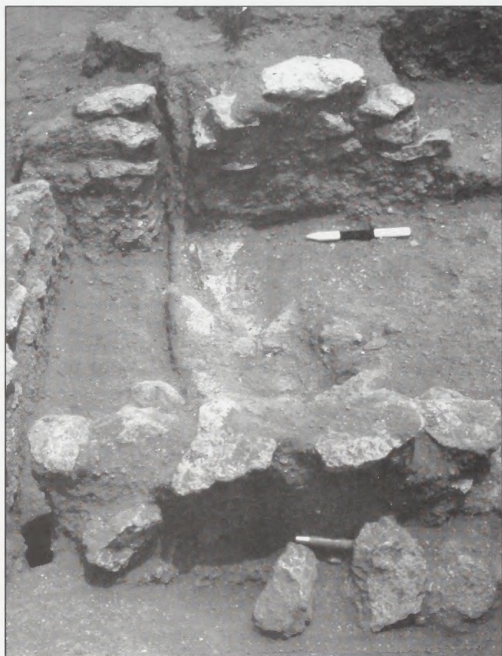


Figure 74. North end of Room B6 where it extended into the southwest corner of pit house Room B4 (30 cm arrow points north).

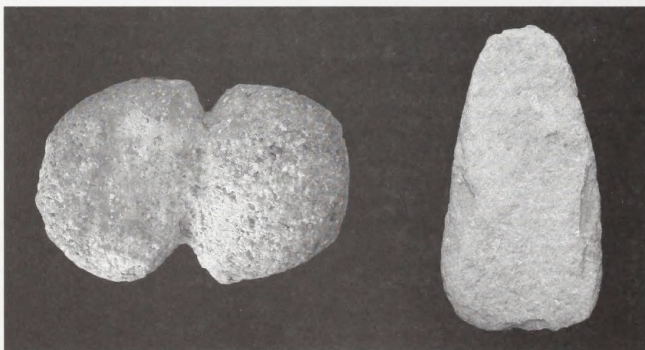


Figure 75. Grooved maul perhaps placed as a dedicatory object immediately beneath the north wall of Room B6 (*left*) and "hoe" that was on top of the east wall remnant (*right*).

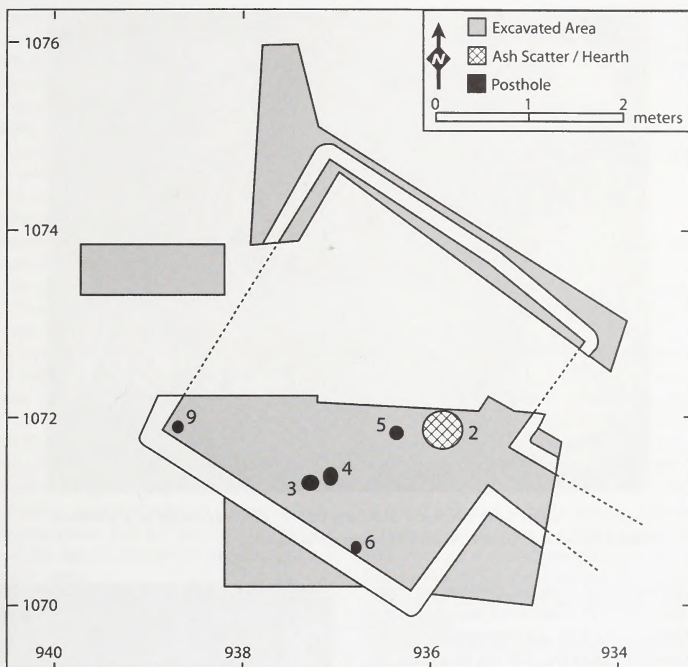


Figure 76. Plan of Unit 9 and Room B8.



Figure 77. Exposed floor area in Room B8.





Figure 78. Items from the floor of Room B8: (a) rim fragments of a Mimbres Black-on-white, Style II, vessel; (b) pottery scrapers.

extends southeastward from the approximate center of the eastern wall. The interior of the entryway is approximately 50 cm wide at its intersection with the room. Because the entryway was not excavated, the method of its construction is unknown.

**Entry ramp length:** Unknown

**Entry ramp width:** 50 cm

**Entry ramp orientation:** Southeast

**Floor:** For the most part, the floor is well-worn bedrock, patched or smoothed with adobe in some areas.

**Hearth form and size:** Circular, adobe-lined basin 30 cm in diameter, 10 cm deep. On the side of the hearth facing the entryway, adobe was mounded several centimeters above the floor, perhaps to function as a deflector.

**Other floor features:** Five postholes (Features B8-3–B8-6 and B8-9) are present in the excavated portion of the room. The posthole in the southwestern corner of the room (Feature B8-9) appears to be a shallow socket in the thickened floor adobe of the corner that does not extend into the bedrock and was created during the application of the wall plaster.

**Floor assemblage:** Artifacts found on the floor included three worked sherds, a reconstructible stone bowl, and substantial portions of a Three Circle Neck-Corrugated olla and a Mimbres Black-on-white, Style II, bowl (Figures 78 and 79). Because of the



Figure 79. Stone bowl from floor of Room B8.

large size of the sherds, their presence in concentrations, and the large portions of vessels represented, it is believed that these were intact vessels broken and scattered by the collapsing roof. The remaining portions of these vessels are presumed to be in the unexcavated portion of Room B8.

**Roof:** Thatch and beam impressions in roof fall indicate that Room B8 had a typical Mimbres roof, its vigas and *latillas* supported by vertical posts. A distinctive layer of sherds in the upper portion of the roof fall appears to have been part of the roof

construction material. Reconstructible neck-corrugated and plain ware ollas were recovered immediately above this layer of sherds and appear to represent vessels resting on the roof at the time of its collapse. If this inference is correct, it implies that the roof was flat and was used as an activity area. Four slab fragments, which are probably the remains of a smoke-hole cover above the hearth, were laying directly on roof fall near the entrance.

**Remodeling:** No evidence of remodeling

**Abandonment:** The floor and rooftop artifact assemblages indicate that the room was still in use at the time of burning.

**Dating:** Several of the burned construction timbers yielded tree-ring dates, but only one is a likely cutting date (see Table 4). This specimen (MIM-764) yielded a date of A.D. 897±r, which, with the other “vv” dates, suggests that Room B8 was built ca. A.D. 897. In addition, an archaeomagnetic sample (see Table 5) collected from burned plaster from the south wall yielded a date range of A.D. 940–970 for the destruction of the room. The small quantity of Classic ceramics near the surface is consistent with the archaeomagnetic date for burning and implies that Room B8 had filled nearly to modern ground level by A.D. 1000.

**Postabandonment:** Some time after the room burned, a small pit (Feature B8-1) was dug into the collapsed construction fill in the southeastern portion of the room. This pit contained an ashy fill, a few sherds, and a number of burned and unburned rabbit bones. There was evidence for postabandonment disturbance by a carnivore near the floor in the southeastern corner of the room. Two small elements of human skeletal material suggest that a burial may have been placed in the fill of Room B8 at some point after its abandonment and infilling.

## Room B10

Room B10 (Figures 80 and 81) is a fully excavated, rectangular, masonry-walled pit house in the southern portion of Area B.

**Phase:** Three Circle

**Room shape and size:** Square; 3.15 m on each side

**Depth of Pit into Bedrock:** 30 cm on north side, 70 cm on south side

**Floor area:** 9.95 m<sup>2</sup>

**Wall construction:** Masonry walls of unshaped tuff slabs in adobe mortar ca. 25 cm thick

**Entry:** Extended entry

**Entry ramp length:** 2.3 m

**Entry ramp width:** 40 cm on west end, ca. 60 cm on east end

**Entry ramp orientation:** East

**Floor:** Bedrock smoothed in places with adobe

**Hearth form and size:** Oval depression in bedrock; deflector stone set in adobe

**Other floor features:** Postholes

**Floor assemblage:** None

**Roof:** Evidently, adobe over thatch that in turn lay on wood members.

**Remodeling:** There are two distinct layers of adobe wall plaster in places, indicating that the walls had been refurbished.

**Abandonment:** Burned thatch was present throughout on the floor, but there was little in the way of wood charcoal. None of the postholes contain remnants of posts. However, the quantity of burned thatch and lumps of roof adobe with thatch and beam impressions, as well as the burned wall plaster indicate that the building was destroyed by fire. The paucity of wood charcoal suggests that usable wood was salvaged prior to burning. Unlike nearby Room B2, there was no sediment on the floor indicative of weathering, so we presume that the structure was abandoned, usable materials removed, and the remnant burned.

**Dating:** Archaeomagnetic date of A.D. 840–890 from burned wall plaster. Room B10 is tentatively dated to the Three Circle phase by its shape and the Mimbres Black-on-white, Styles I and II, ceramics in the fill.

**Postabandonment:** The presence of much wall fall above the roof indicates that most of the wall material fell into the pit, effectively filling it. Most of the wall fall and the fill above was removed expeditiously and not screened.

**Comment:** In the central portion of the room, there is a slight, linear break in the bedrock floor suggestive of the edge of an earlier pit structure (see Figure 81). On the north, this cut curves around to the west and merges with the north wall, much like the corners of other pit structures, and, to a lesser extent, it does the same on the south. The west wall was placed on a bedrock cut, indicating that if there were an earlier room, it did not extend farther west. In the entryway, the step at the room opening consists of adobe that extends east some 55 cm to a bedrock cut that could possibly mark the end of the entryway for an earlier pit structure, most of which was destroyed during construction of Room B10. The thin deposit of fill between the bedrock and B10's adobe flooring (where present) may be consistent with this possibility.

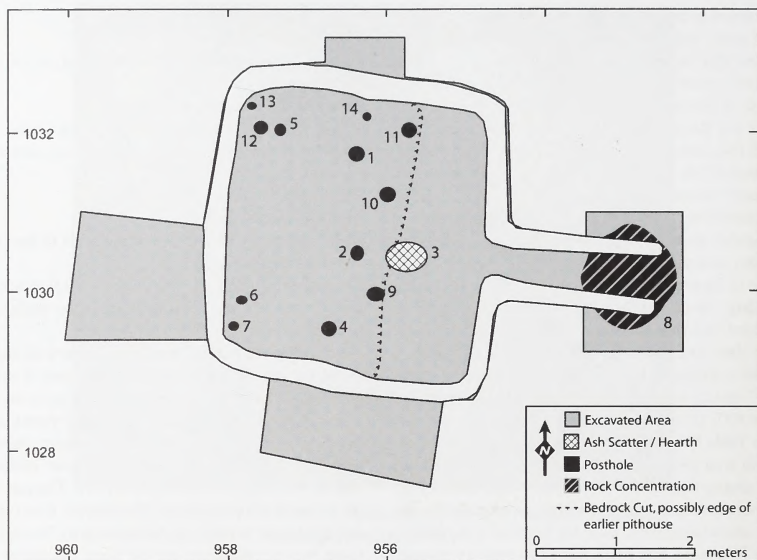


Figure 80. Plan of Unit 19 excavations and Room B10.



Figure 81. Room B10 excavated to floor (meter scale).



## Room B13

Room B13 is the earliest and most poorly preserved of the three pit structures in Unit 21. Only a small portion of the northwest corner of the room is intact, the remainder having been removed during the construction of Room B9 (see Figure 29).

**Phase:** Three Circle

**Room shape and size:** The shape of the bedrock cut suggests that this room was rectangular.

**Depth of Pit into Bedrock:** ca. 30 cm

**Floor area:** An accurate estimate of the floor area is impossible because only one corner is preserved.

**Wall construction:** It is possible that holes around the edge of the bedrock cut represent postholes indicative of pole-and-adobe construction, but rodent disturbance in the area precludes a definite determination.

**Entry:** Means of access unknown

**Floor:** None discovered

**Hearth form and size:** Unknown

**Other floor features:** None found

**Floor assemblage:** None

**Roof:** No data

**Remodeling:** No data

**Abandonment:** No data

**Dating:** No chronometric dates relate directly to Room B13, but the shape dates it to the Three Circle phase. It is stratigraphically beneath Room B9, which is believed to have been constructed after about A.D. 850. No artifactual evidence indicates a more meaningful date. Thus, the meager information available suggests that Room B13 was probably constructed some time between approximately A.D. 750 and 850.

**Postabandonment:** At some point after abandonment, the remnants of Room B13 were almost completely destroyed by the construction of B9, and the only remnant so far recognized is the northwest corner.

## Room C4

Room C4 is the only fully excavated pit house among those that were encountered during our excavations in Area C (Figures 82 and 83; see Figure 28). Although it has been disturbed by later Black Mountain phase construction and pothunting, it is nevertheless relatively well preserved.

**Phase:** Cumbre or Georgetown

**Room shape and size:** D-shaped; 3.0 m east-west by 3.75 m north-south

**Depth of Pit into Bedrock:** 0.3 m

**Floor area:** 10 m<sup>2</sup>

**Wall construction:** Pole and adobe. Within a large outer pit (4 m east-west, slightly more north-south) is the slightly smaller and deeper D-shaped pit whose bottom is considered to be the floor. On the nearly level "step" between the two are several sockets dug into bedrock, as well as two deeper, better-defined holes interpreted as postholes. Most of the sockets are only 10 cm deep, and some could even be rodent holes (of which there were many). Presumably, if these are post sockets, the posts in them leaned slightly toward the center of the structure, connecting with the roof.

**Entry:** Extended entryway. There is a series of small, shallow sockets or postholes parallel to and about 15 cm south of the south bedrock cut edge that is presumed to have marked a jacal wall. Disturbance on the north side apparently destroyed any such features on the north side.

**Entry ramp length:** 1.5 m

**Entry ramp width:** 0.5 m

**Entry ramp orientation:** West

**Floor:** Slightly smoothed and discolored bedrock

**Hearth form and size:** None definitely identified. However, there are two relatively large, shallow depressions in the bedrock floor (C4-11 and C4-13), either of which could have been the hearth. Neither exhibited visible evidence of burning (but neither did any other pit house hearth that was a basin in bedrock), and no ash or charcoal was present in the fill.

**Other floor features:** None

**Floor assemblage:** None

**Roof:** Since no internal postholes are present, the means of roof support are unknown. No remains of the roof were recognized as such.

**Remodeling:** None evident

**Abandonment:** The room appears to have been abandoned and allowed to decay.

**Dating:** No chronometric dates; structure shape suggests a Cumbre or Georgetown phase date.

**Postabandonment:** The fill is a rather uniform, loose, silty deposit containing occasional rocks but few artifacts. Rodent burrowing is extensive. Even where disturbed by pothunting (which was most of the room), the fill was very similar. Sometime after abandonment, storage pit C4-12 was dug into the

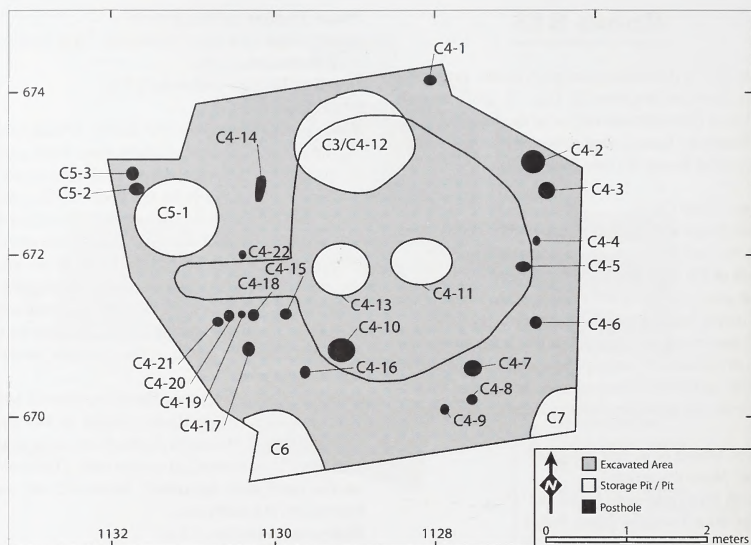


Figure 82. Plan of Room C4 and storage pits in Unit 16.



Figure 83. Photograph of Room C4 excavated to bedrock; remnant of adobe footing for wall of Black Mountain phase Room C3 is still in situ, and Feature C3/C4-12 is not yet excavated (meter scale; arrow points grid east).

north side, extending below C4's floor. Similarly, storage pit C5-1 was dug immediately adjacent to the entryway; their proximity suggests that they were not contemporaneous. Black Mountain phase Room C3 was built over the pit structure, with the footing trenches dug into the fill. A cluster of human bones in the Room C4 fill may relate to C3.

## Storage Pits

During the course of the project, a number of pits assumed to be storage facilities were found in Areas A, B, and C, all attributable to the Late Pithouse period and perhaps even the Early Pithouse period. These are more or less circular, 1–2 m across, and the depth into the bedrock is usually no more than 50 cm (Table 12). In almost all cases, the fill from the excavated pits is undifferentiated midden containing small quantities of artifacts and other debris. As noted in Chapter 3, some of these pits have rings of postholes just beyond the pit edge that are believed to reflect a substantial superstructure. This is consistent with the occurrence of burned roofing on the bottom of one pit, Feature A7-26 (see below). It is also consistent with findings at Galaz, where a storage function has been proposed for the similar pits or cysts (Anyon and LeBlanc 1984:88).

At Galaz, almost all of the cysts for which there is good evidence clearly date prior to the Classic period. More specific evidence that such pits date to the Late Pithouse period comes from Harris Village, just a few miles up the Mimbres River from the Galaz site. Pits of the same dimensions as those at Old Town and Galaz, though apparently without associated postholes, were present at Harris, but there was no occupation at that site after the Late Pithouse period (Haury 1936:64).

This leads to the inference that at least some of the storage facilities at Old Town were partially subterranean but had post-and-adobe superstructures that would have substantially increased storage capacity. Discussions of the theoretical implications of storage pits, particularly as they relate to mobility, generally hold that storage pits that can be concealed reflect more mobile or semisedentary groups (see Wills 1991, 1992; Young 1996). As elsewhere in the U.S. Southwest, Mimbres archaeologists generally have adhered to this assumption, but the presence of several storage pits with obvious aboveground superstructures at Old Town and Galaz should force us to reconsider. Clearly, such storage facilities would have been quite obvious and would not appear to be facilities left full

of food and unprotected for an extended period of time. In my view, these facilities suggest that some of the Late Pithouse period communities in the Mimbres area may have been fully sedentary.

Table 12 presents a calculation of pit volume from the top of bedrock to the bottom. Whether the top of bedrock was the actual surface at the time of use is unknown, but it was probably slightly higher. The actual pit volume is less than 1 m<sup>3</sup> for most of these features, although some are bigger. In addition, several appear to have been truncated by later construction and would have had larger volumes when in use. In any event, with one or two exceptions, the pits themselves would not have been particularly large storage pits; but, if they had superstructures of comparable or larger capacity, they would have been substantial facilities. Perhaps the bedrock at Old Town posed the same limitation for storage pits as it did for pit structures, and as much or more of the storage facility would have been above ground as below.

As is indicated in Table 12, not all of the storage pits found during our excavations were excavated. The six best-known storage pits are more fully described here, as is Feature C18, a larger pit that could possibly represent a small pit house rather than a storage facility. The others were either minimally tested or were not excavated beyond exposing their perimeter at the top of bedrock.

## Feature A7-26

Feature A7-26 is a roughly circular pit (1.84 m east-west by 1.94 m north-south) dug some 40 cm into bedrock (see Figures 60 and 61). That it was clearly a roofed structure is indicated by a well-defined layer of burned thatch and small sticks (no adobe) lying directly on its bedrock floor. At the time of excavation, we were not specifically searching for associated postholes, although several postholes were found in the immediate vicinity. Some of these were associated with overlapping pit house A12, but others could possibly be linked with A7-26. The fill above the burned roofing was a relatively sterile fill composed primarily of broken-up bedrock and appeared to be a deliberate deposit placed there in one episode. The only cultural material from this essentially sterile fill appeared to have been introduced by aboriginal and/or modern disturbance, including some animal burrows. The only artifact clearly associated with Feature A7-26 was a circular, perforated sherd of Mimbres Black-on-white, Style I (Boldface), lying on the floor. On this meager basis, we infer that Feature A7-26 dates to the Three Circle phase.



Table 12. Attributes of Large Extramural Storage Pits

Feature	Unit	Dimensions (m)	Depth in Bedrock (m)	Pit Volume (m <sup>3</sup> )	Associated Postholes	Phase	Comments
A7-26	1C	1.94 N-S, 1.84 E-W	0.4	1.11	possibly	Three Circle	burned thatch on floor
A13-1	10	1.45 diameter	0.4	0.67	yes	Three Circle	northern half excavated
A18	22	0.90 N-S, 0.75 E-W	0.21	0.11		Three Circle	partially excavated
A74	32	0.66 N-S, 0.90 E-W	0.63	0.34		Classic?	100 sherds in fill: 17 are Classic period types, but most are Late Pithouse period (including 58 plain)
A81	22	0.97 diameter	0.36	0.26		late San Francisco or early Three Circle	upper portion removed prior to construction of Room A71
A102	32	0.70 diameter	0.22	0.08		late San Francisco or early Three Circle	
A106	32	1.05 N-S, 0.70 E-W	0.36	0.21		late San Francisco or early Three Circle	fill not screened, but no artifacts observed
C2-32	14	1.52 N-S, 1.30 E-W	0.27	0.43		no data	no ceramics attributable to fill
C4-12	16	1.23 N-S, 1.60 E-W	0.4	0.62		no data	no ceramics attributable to fill
C5-1	16	1.00 diameter	0.52	0.41		undetermined	one Chupadero Black-on-white sherd in fill
C6	16	ca. 1.00 diameter	0.46	0.36		no data	unexcavated; depth estimate based on probe
C7	16	ca. 1.00 diameter	0.51	0.4		no data	unexcavated; depth estimate based on probe
C18	26	ca. 2-2.5 diameter	0.85	3.23		undetermined	tested only; dimensions estimated based on probe; possible plaster on bedrock wall and, thus, could be small pit house; one Reserve Black-on-white and one untyped Chihuahua polychrome sherd in fill
C19	18/25	1.1 N-S, 0.7 E-W	0.17	0.43	yes	undetermined	7 definite, 2 possible postholes in ring around pit; one sherd of untyped white ware in fill
C20	18/25	1.46 diameter	0.15	0.25	yes	undetermined	possibly 25 cm deeper originally; 9 postholes in ring around pit; 8 sockets around edge may reflect renovation; one untyped Chihuahua polychrome sherd and one untyped white ware sherd in fill

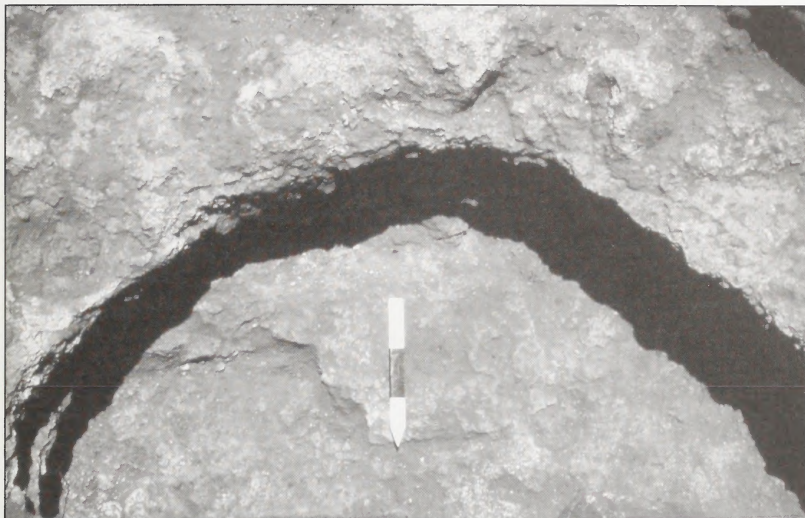


Figure 84. Overhead photograph of Feature A13 (storage pit).

### Feature A13-1

Although only half of this storage facility was excavated (Figure 84; see Figure 26), this was adequate for determining that the pit, 1.45 m diameter at the top of bedrock and approximately 1.60 m diameter at the bottom, is slightly bell-shaped and apparently has a surrounding set of postholes. The pit is 0.40 m deep in bedrock and would have had a volume of slightly more than  $0.67 \text{ m}^3$ . If the superstructure provided for an equivalent volume, the total storage capacity would have been some  $3.5 \text{ m}^3$ . The relatively loose midden fill contained small quantities of artifacts, and the only sherds in the meager collection were two plain ware body sherds, suggesting at most a Late Pithouse period date.

### Feature A74

Feature A74 is an oval pit less than a meter across but, at 63 cm depth, was deeper than most of the other comparable pits (see Figure 45). No surrounding ring of postholes was observed. The fill contained a relatively large number of artifacts including 100 sherds. Of these, 17 were Mimbres Black-on-white,

Style III; Mimbres Corrugated; or Playas, whereas the others were Late Pithouse period types. It is not clear if this is a Late Pithouse period feature with Classic period sherds in the fill as a result of bioturbation or if this is actually a Classic period pit.

### Feature A81

Feature A81 is slightly less than 1 m in diameter and 0.36 m deep in bedrock. It may well have been somewhat deeper originally, as its upper portion was apparently removed during construction of Room A71. This pit is slightly bell-shaped and, thus, a bit larger in diameter at the bottom. Its fill contained more artifactual material than the other comparable pits, and the array of ceramics is consistent with the Late San Francisco or perhaps early Three Circle phase age of overlying Room A71.

### Feature C18

Below Black Mountain phase pueblo Room C11, the western edge of Feature C18, a large pit, intrudes into a pit structure (Room C17). Very little of either was excavated, but enough was done to reveal that the

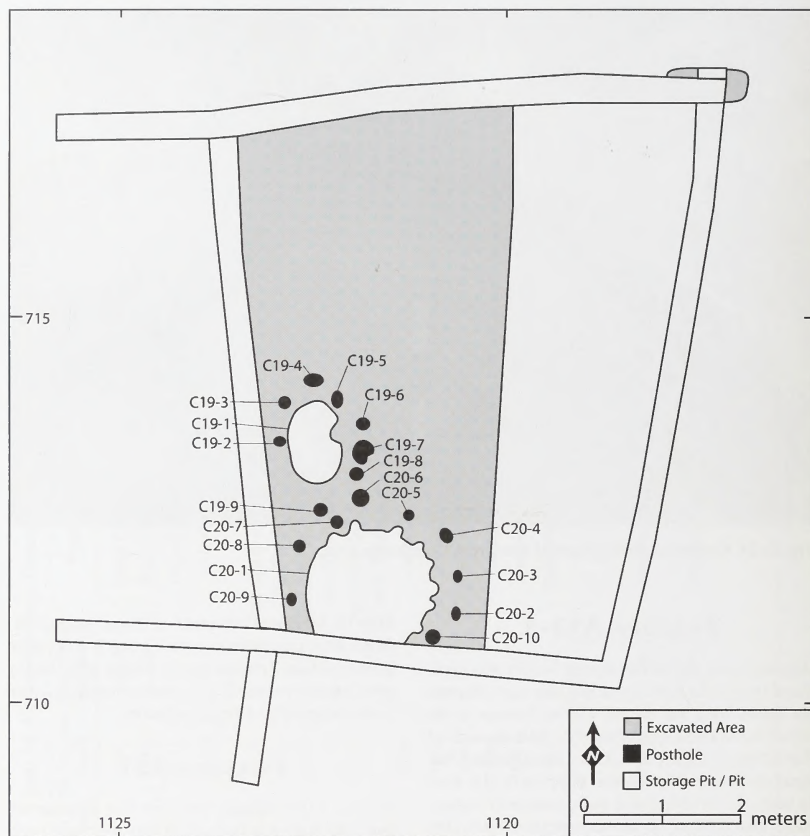


Figure 85. Plan of storage pits C19 and C20 beneath Room C10.

pit structure has a curved north wall, indicating that it probably dates to the Early Pithouse period or to the Georgetown phase of the Late Pithouse period. Room C17 was truncated by the digging of Feature C18, a very large pit estimated to be ca. 2.5 m in diameter. The latter has small remnants of what may have been plaster on its bedrock wall, but the bedrock bottom has no preserved adobe floor in the small exposed section. Given the presence of possible plaster on the walls, it is possible that Feature C18 is a small pit house, but its size is more consistent with that of storage pits.

## Feature C19

Feature C19 is one of two large pits beneath and predating Black Mountain phase Room C10. It is oval, 1.1 m north-south, 0.7 m east-west, and only 0.17 m deep in bedrock (Figure 85) but, like C20, may have been deeper. Feature C19 has a surrounding set of seven definite and two possible postholes, each 7–10 cm in diameter. There was one untyped non-Mimbres white ware sherd in the fill, and such white ware sherds found in good contexts elsewhere at the site evidently date to the Late Pithouse period.



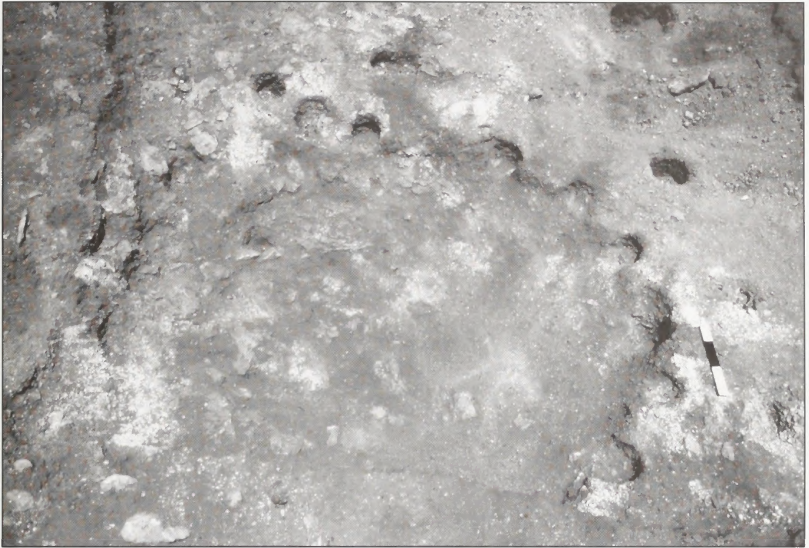


Figure 86. Feature C20 (arrow points grid north).

This suggests a Late Pithouse period date for the fill and pit use.

### Feature C20

Feature C20 is the second of two large pits beneath and predating Black Mountain phase Room C10. It is 1.46 m in diameter and only 0.15 m deep in bedrock (Figure 86; see Figure 85). However, it is possible that the pit was originally some 25 cm deeper, having been beveled off for construction of the overlying room. It has a surrounding ring of nine postholes, each 7–10 cm in diameter and a similar set of eight posthole-like sockets around its periphery. It was not clear, however, if the sockets and postholes were contemporaneous or if they relate to renovation of the facility. There were only two sherds in the fill, one a small untyped sherd of Chihuahua polychrome, the other a small untyped non-Mimbres white ware sherd. Neither is considered to reflect the age of the pit although the white ware sherd may indicate a Late Pithouse period date.

### Comments on Wall Construction Techniques in Old Town Pit Structures

One of the more intriguing findings of our excavations concerns the variation in pit structure wall construction techniques. As noted previously, some domestic pit structures had typical Mimbres pole-and-adobe walls, whereas others had masonry walls above the subsurface portion. Masonry is not unknown in Mimbres pit structures, but only rarely are all four walls masonry, as is the case with several structures at Old Town. It is interesting, in this regard, to consider briefly the pit structures in Area B. Room B4, for example, has masonry walls as thick as most in later Classic period surface-pueblo rooms. Because the pits are little more than half a meter deep, most of the walls and, thus, the structure itself, are above ground. These clearly are load-bearing walls and it is likely that all of these pit structures had sturdy, flat roofs. In appearance, at least, these buildings probably

looked much like later surface rooms and, if anything, probably were more difficult and time-consuming to build because they were dug into solid rock.

Although much has been said about the pit house-to-pueblo transition in the U.S. Southwest and the Mimbres area specifically (e.g., Gilman 1987, 1997; Stokes and Roth 1999; Wills 2001), it may be that this transition is not explained fully by increasing commitment to agriculture or increased sedentism but perhaps had much to do with site location relative to sources of construction wood (see also Diehl 1997:188–189). That is, construction of the more typical pole-and-adobe walls may have become so costly at Old Town—namely, because of the ever increasing distance to good construction timbers—that converting to load-bearing masonry or coursed-adobe walls may well have been decidedly cost-effective. Changing the method of wall construction thus would have substantially decreased the number of timbers needed per pit house, and the rock used in masonry was available onsite.

As discussed in Chapter 4, however, the same is not true of the large communal pit structures. Both Rooms A16 and A71 apparently had large numbers of small-diameter timbers within their walls, as was the case with virtually all well-documented, large communal pit structures in the Mimbres area. It may be, therefore, that cost alone was not the determining factor in wall construction technology; intended use, civic-ceremonial versus domestic, and religious tradition may well have been more important.

More generally, it is worth repeating that all known pit structures at Old Town, regardless of age or use, are relatively shallow because they were dug into the tuff bedrock on which the site is located. Most of the buildings tended to be above ground regardless of the construction technique used for the superstructure. Indeed, in many regards, the so-called pit house-to-pueblo transition, traditionally dated at about A.D. 1000, may have been something of an architectural nonevent to the Mimbrenos of Old Town.

## Courtyard Groups and Pit House Function

As noted previously, Area B contains five, and perhaps more, Three Circle phase pit structures that were at least in part contemporaneous, sometime around A.D. 900. One of the most interesting findings of our excavations in Area B is the arrangement of four of these around a common courtyard area (Figure 87). This is the first such documented occurrence in

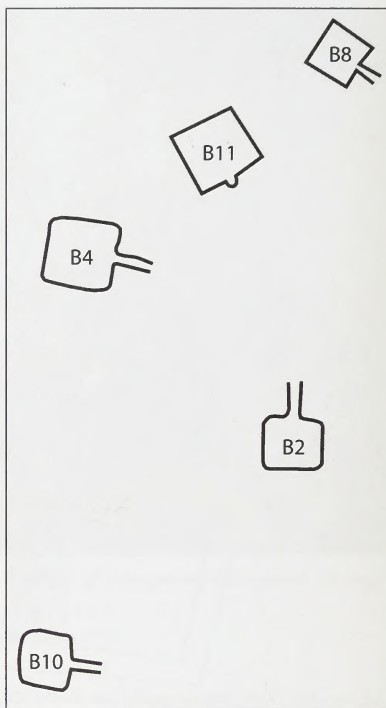


Figure 87. Area B courtyard group.

the Mimbres area (Lucas 1996), although Bradfield (1931) thought there were such pit house groupings at the Cameron Creek site, and Shafer (2003) has argued for one at the NAN ruin. Lucas (1996) has suggested that they may also have been present at Lee village on the Gila River.

The Area B group evidently had three domestic pit structures and a kiva around the courtyard, with a fourth pit house just to the south. All of the pit houses have masonry walls, whereas the kiva has coursed-adobe walls. Unfortunately, we do not know if this was the typical arrangement of pit structures at that time throughout Old Town; we simply have not excavated enough in other parts of the site. But we do know that apparently unusual architecture distinguishes the Area B group from the few contemporaneous remains identified to date elsewhere at the site. Most other pit structures apparently have pole-and-adobe walls, not masonry or coursed

Table 13. Characteristics of Area B Pit Structures

Characteristic	B2	B4 (late)	B8	B10	B11
Floor area (m <sup>2</sup> )	12	17.6	12	10	18
Ventilator					X
Possible raised floor		X			
Formal hearth	X		X	X	X
Vessels		X			X
Metate/grinding slab	X	X			X
Other complete objects			X		X

adobe, as is the case in Area B. Thus, although it is clear that the Old Town Mimbresños had at least one intracommunity architectural grouping during the Three Circle phase, it is by no means clear that this was characteristic of the entire village. If not, the significance of this particular grouping is unknown.

It is also entirely possible that this courtyard group was only the latest version of a group that underwent some growth. Prior to construction of kiva Room B11, large pit structure B9 was present in the same location, and its entryway opened onto the courtyard area. Neither of these pit structures is considered to have been domestic, so the rebuilding of special structures in that specific location suggests an earlier group of buildings. In addition, Room B4 originally had its entryway on the south side, but that entry was sealed and a new one built on the east side opening onto the common area. Given the evidence for a slightly deeper, earlier floor in what would have been a smaller rectangular pit structure, it is also entirely possible that Room B10 was almost completely rebuilt, including switching the entry to the east side from its previous location. No remodeling other than the addition of new floors or layers of wall plaster could be definitely recognized in any of the other pit houses. In summary, there is evidence that there were at least two, possibly more, structures in Area B prior to the time of the clearly recognizable courtyard group. These were large Room B9 and pit house Room B4, perhaps with an early version of pit house B10. Whether pit houses B2 and B8 also existed at that time is unknown but certainly possible, at least for B2. And as noted previously, it is probable that additional uninvestigated pit structures are present in Area B. How these would relate to courtyard groups is unknown.

In recent years, a number of archaeologists have attempted to determine whether or not individual pit

structures like those at Old Town represent a nuclear family house and whether there is functional variation among pit structures (for example, see various chapters in Doyel [1987, 2000], Fish and Fish [1991], Doelle and Wallace [1991], and Wallace [2003]). The question has not been of great concern to Mimbres archaeologists, but it appears to me that some of our Area B data are of interest in this regard. Table 13 presents data on some basic characteristics of the Area B pit structures.

Architecturally, the principal distinctions are in presence/absence of a ventilator and the related means of entry, whether it be the typical Mimbres lateral entryway or a ceiling hatchway. As noted previously, these characteristics readily distinguish Room B11 from all the other Area B pit structures, as it is the only one with a ventilator and a ceiling hatchway (see Table 13). On this basis, consistent with the general interpretation of such pit structures by Mimbres area archaeologists, Room B11 is identified as a nondomestic or ritual structure (see Chapter 6 for discussion of this and another pit structure as small kivas). All of the other pit structures had lateral entryways but no ventilator and thus are considered to have been domestic structures.

It is important to note that not all pit structures in Area B have formal hearths. Room B4, the pit structure whose original entryway was sealed and replaced with a new one on the east side, does not have a formal hearth on either floor, although it does have an ash concentration on the lower floor in the location typical for hearths. In contrast, all of the other pit structures in Area B (for which we have data) have formal hearths in the form of basins dug into the bedrock. These are all directly in front of the entryway, or in the case of Room B11, in front of the ventilator, and all contained charcoal and ash as one would expect. Thus, the lack of a hearth in Room B4 is conspicuous relative to the



other contemporaneous pit structures in this part of the site.

It is also interesting in this regard that Room B4 is half again as large as any of the other more or less contemporaneous, domestic pit structures in Area B. That is, those pit structures with formal hearths are all about the same size, at about 10–12 m<sup>2</sup> in floor area, whereas Room B4, lacking a formal hearth, is significantly larger (17.6 m<sup>2</sup>).

Elsewhere, I have commented on the large number of postholes in the floor of Room B4, even suggesting the possibility that the narrow diameter of the clearly defined postmolds (ca. 5 cm) and their close spacing might be more consistent with short forked posts supporting a raised floor than with actual roof-support posts. On the other hand, more numerous but narrower posts would presumably be capable of supporting the roof, even if these rooms would have been somewhat more cluttered than those with fewer posts. No other pit structure in Area B (or elsewhere at the site), except for large Room B9, has such closely and regularly spaced postholes, and I think it worth considering that this reflects a different use for Room B4, regardless of whether or not it may have had a raised floor.

More difficult to assess are two other sets of data, one relating to types and numbers of artifacts on the floor of these pit structures, the other relating to outside space. For the former, we have meaningful, positive data for only three of the five adequately known pit structures in Area B (see Table 13). Other than a small grinding slab on the floor of Room B2, neither it nor Room B10 had a floor assemblage (milling implements, whole or partial vessels, or other significant artifacts), in contrast to Rooms B4, B8, and B11, perhaps because of different abandonment modes. All of these structures were burned, although usable wood had evidently been scavenged from Room B2 before the remnants were burned, and, to some extent, this may have been the case in Room B10 as well. In addition, several centimeters of finely laminated wash on the floor indicates that Room B2 stood for some time before burning. The kinds of artifacts present in these two rooms prior to abandonment are unknown.

However, in Rooms B4, B8, and B11, there were substantial numbers of items clearly on the floor, with the fallen, burned roof lying directly on them. No milling implements, especially metates, were present in the excavated portion of Room B8, but a small grinding slab was present on the floor of Room B2, a metate on the floor of Room B4, and a metate with a mano still on it on a sloping

rock-and-adobe support in Room B11. In addition, several other manos were present on the floor elsewhere in that room.

Rooms B4, B8, and B11 had several reconstructible vessels or vessel fragments on their floors. In both B4 and B8, there were two or more large Three Circle Corrugated jars, but there was only one in Room B11. Mimbres Black-on-white, Style II, bowls, whole or substantially so, were present in Room B8 and B11, and there was a large Mimbres Black-on-white, Style I, sherd on the floor of Room B4. In addition, there was a largely complete plain ware bowl, an El Paso Brown jar, and an untyped painted jar in Room B4. In terms of other notable objects on the floor, Room B8 contained a stone bowl, a core, a hammer stone, and several sherd scrapers, whereas Room B11 had a grooved stone maul and flaked stone “hoe” fragments (as well as a hoe set in adobe immediately adjacent to the hearth).

There are, thus, no major differences between these rooms in terms of floor assemblages aside from the general lack of objects in Rooms B2 and B10. Instead, it is in the architecture that we see differences that may be functionally distinctive: size, means of entry, presence or absence of a hearth, and the possibility of a raised floor.

The possibility of outside storage space attached to a pit structure is not one that, to my knowledge, has come to light before and is not, therefore, so easily evaluated. As described earlier in the chapter, we found part of a post-reinforced adobe wall connected to the end of the original entryway for Room B4. Although the original length of the wall is unknown, it could have formed a third side of the space east of the entryway on the south side of the pit structure. It is thus possible that this was an enclosed space adjacent to the entryway of Room B4, and perhaps such space existed on both sides (the west side had been much modified by construction of Room B6). The outdoor space immediately south of this wall had a series of five superimposed adobe surfaces, suggesting a much-used extramural area. Regrettably, we did not excavate comparable areas in the other units with pit structures or even adjacent to the later entryway of Room B4.

The point in raising this issue is that some Mimbres pit structures could have been more complex buildings than we have realized and could have had larger enclosed areas. If the area on each side of a pit structure's extended entryway were enclosed, this would have provided additional spaces suitable for storage. This is a possibility that needs to be tested, particularly inasmuch as it might affect arguments

about households, household economics, pit structure function, and even the implications of courtyard groups (see Wills [2001] for a useful discussion of some of these issues).

In this vein, we might consider as well the possible implications of the flat roofs in most, if not all, of the Area B pit structures. Clearly, kiva Room B11 had a flat roof that, by virtue of having the entry hatchway, was strong enough to support the weight of individuals. There clearly were objects on its roof, and this seems to have been the case in Room B8 as well. Inferring from their substantial, apparently load-bearing walls that all of the Area B pit structures could have had flat roofs, it seems reasonable that these flat areas would have been used for various activities. As noted previously, the fact that their floors were only about a half-meter deep in bedrock meant that most of the structures were actually above ground and scarcely different from later surface pueblo rooms. That is, the roof would have been fairly high relative to ground surface. There is no reason that the "roof" of one of these masonry-walled pit structures couldn't have been enclosed by a jacal wall and/or roof, although no evidence supporting such an idea

is known (but have we ever excavated with that possibility in mind?).

In sum, there is architectural evidence for functional variation among the different pit structures in Area B. The presence of a ventilator and a ceiling hatchway distinguish Room B11 and are consistent with criteria traditionally used to define small kivas in the Mimbres area. Beyond this, the most obvious difference is in floor area and presence or absence of a formal hearth, and on both counts, Room B4 stands apart from the other domestic pit structures. In addition, other architectural features distinguish Room B4. Most notable, but difficult to evaluate, are a possible attached storage space and an unusually large number of posts that conceivably could reflect a raised floor. With this suite of attributes, Room B4 might have had storage and other functions in contrast to the hearth-related activities and functions of the other domestic pit structures. Therefore, as has been suggested for other parts of the U.S. Southwest, it is possible that individual households may have had more than one pit structure, each serving somewhat different purposes and used for various activities.





## Large Communal Pit Structures and Kivas

During the course of investigations at Old Town, we excavated all or part of six pit structures that differ from others at the site in size, proportions, construction material, means of access, and presence or absence of ventilators. Five are pit structures of the sort traditionally identified in the regional literature as having primarily ritual, ceremonial, communal, or civic-ceremonial use. The sixth is included because of its large size, although it differs somewhat from any others and has not been so confidently identified as a special, ritually important building. Another possible, large, semisubterranean pit structure has long been thought to be present on the east side of Area A and was partially excavated (Unit 2), although it did not yield recognizable evidence of architecture.

Three of these, Rooms A16, A67, and A71, are considerably larger than other contemporaneous buildings and fit comfortably into the category of large communal pit structure as defined by Anyon and LeBlanc (1980, 1984) for the Mimbres area. Similar structures at other Mimbres sites have frequently been referred to as great kivas, although Anyon and LeBlanc (1980 and 1984) and LeBlanc (1983) prefer the term “large communal pit structure” to distinguish them from ancestral Pueblo great kivas, because in the early 1980s there were no small kivas known to be contemporaneous. Creel and Anyon (2003) have briefly described these three large structures and discussed at some length their relevance to the Mimbres area.

Two smaller pit structures, Rooms A83 and B11, are herein referred to as kivas, consistent with the use of that term elsewhere in the Mimbres area (although Shafer [2003] has expanded the use of the term “kiva” to include Classic pueblo surface rooms with double hearths). The presence of ventilators and ceiling entry distinguished them from their domestic contemporaries, which have extended entryways but lack ventilators. Both A83 and B11 have chronometric dates

for either or both construction and destruction, and both appear to have been built sometime around A.D. 900. Thus, they are among the earliest kivas known in the Mimbres area.

As noted above, the sixth pit structure, Room B9, is included here primarily because of its size. With a floor area of approximately 40 m<sup>2</sup>, it is considerably larger than most other Three Circle phase pit structures at Old Town and other Mimbres sites and on this basis qualifies as a large communal pit structure along with Rooms A16, A67, and A71. Aside from size, Room B9 appears to bear little similarity to the other large pit structures at Old Town. Its proportions are decidedly different from almost all other pit structures known in the Mimbres area, and because its length-to-width ratio is almost 2 to 1, it more resembles Hohokam pit structures. The fact that it was built of coursed adobe suggests a special function, as the only other coursed-adobe pit structures found at the site to date, A71 and B11, are more clearly ritual buildings. Indeed, the latter appears to have replaced Room B9 in the group of Three Circle phase pit structures in Area B.

### Large Communal Pit Structures at the Old Town Site

During the 12 seasons of excavations at the Old Town site, four large pit structures have been identified, three of them in the northeast part of Area A, a special part of this large community adjacent to the prehistoric road (Figure 88; see Figure 13). All three predate A.D. 1000. One of the three large pit structures in Area A (Room A67) has been only minimally investigated but clearly appears to have been round. A second, Room A71, is somewhat better



Figure 88. Plan of excavations in northeast Area A showing location of large communal pit structures and other features.

known and appears to have been roughly D-shaped. The third, Room A16, has been much more extensively excavated and is rectangular. It is relatively well dated to the period ca. A.D. 874–925 based on construction and destruction dates. Room A71 has not been directly dated because of a lack of samples, but a date of around A.D. 800 has been assigned to its construction based on stratigraphy and artifact associations. The archaeomagnetic sample of burned wall plaster from Room A67 did not clearly yield a date because there was uncertainty in field documentation. As a group, these buildings conform to the sequence of shape changes described by Anyon and LeBlanc (1980, 1984) for the Mimbres area.

In addition, our magnetometer surveys, particularly one in 2003, revealed an anomalous area large enough to represent another large communal pit structure immediately south of Room A16. In fact, the 1997 Unit 31 excavations were made to test the

possibility, based on details from aerial photograph, that there was a large pit structure in this location. The northwest corner of a rectangular pit structure (A47) was found, but the excavations were too limited to reveal the size of this structure. In 2003, small Unit 35 was dug specifically to determine whether the edge of the magnetic anomaly coincided with the edge of a pit structure. It did actually coincide with the corner of a rectangular pit structure (A120), but again the excavation was too limited to reveal structure size. Thus, we suspect that the anomaly reflects a large area of deeper bedrock, but even if so, we do not know if the two corners (A47 and A120) are in the same pit structure. Alignments of projected walls suggest that different pit structures are represented, but the very small exposures preclude a definitive assessment. At this point, we do not know if there is another large communal pit structure here or anywhere else at the site.

## Room A16

Room A16 is a well-preserved rectangular pit structure, of which approximately 70 percent was excavated in 1996 and 1998. It has interior dimensions of 9.5 by 8.25 m and an extended entryway about 4.5 m long (Figures 89–91); its floor area, exclusive of the entryway, is approximately 78 m<sup>2</sup>. Unlike similar structures excavated at other Mimbres sites, Room A16 was built in a relatively shallow pit dug some 50 cm into solid tuff bedrock; as a result, most of this building was above the level of the surrounding ground surface. Fallen walls and roof made up virtually all of the fill, a fact that allowed us to recognize some of the key aspects of the structure's life history.

### Wall Construction

As noted previously, the construction of Room A16 began with the excavation of a rectangular pit some 50 cm into solid tuff bedrock. The top edges of this pit were used as the base for walls approximately 50 cm thick and built largely of adobe, but several large slabs had been set vertically and aligned with the axes of the individual walls. More important, the adobe was applied in a series of vertical, sheet-like applications up to ca. 10 cm thick, also aligned with the wall axis. Because all four walls had been laid over *en masse* in Room A16, it was possible to determine that they were at least 3 m high (from floor level).

In addition, as was the case with most other excavated large communal pit structures in the Mimbres area, the walls of Room A16 had posts within the adobe as revealed by a series of postmolds every 35–40 cm in the fallen south wall. Despite little evidence that any of the posts within the walls was actually set in a posthole, we nonetheless suspect that at least some of these were load bearing. Indeed, it is easy to understand the need for load-bearing posts within the walls, given their construction.

The only known exception to this type of wall construction is in the central portion of the west wall, which was masonry (above the bedrock cut) up to perhaps 1 m above floor (Figure 92). Even there, however, we found what is believed to be a shallow postmold between slabs. We cannot explain why this portion of wall was masonry, differing from the others in the room, but it is presumed to relate to its central location in the west wall.

The northwest corner of Room A16 cut into previously destroyed Room A71, and thus its bedrock wall

base was not as high as elsewhere. Curiously, though, the builders of A16 placed small slabs horizontally in the adobe wall base at about the same level as adjacent undisturbed bedrock. As no structural reason could be discerned for the placement of these slabs, we suggest that they were deliberately placed in this particular area to facilitate even snapping of the wall at its base when it was later pushed over into the room (see below for discussion of destruction).

The interior surface of the walls had been covered with a very well-finished plaster that may have been painted (Figure 93). Unfortunately, little of this remained *in situ*, and all was intensely burned. Virtually all of the fallen plaster had crumbled into small fragments. In most parts of the room, the plaster applied to the bedrock edge of the pit remained intact and was the source of samples that yielded an archaeomagnetic date for the burning of Room A16 (discussed below).

### Roof Construction

Basic structural support for the roof was provided by three interior posts; evidently, the center post was substantially larger in diameter than the other two. Charred remnants of the two lateral posts, both Douglas fir ca. 20–25 cm in diameter, were still in place in the postholes, but as is discussed below, the center post remnant had been removed prehistorically. It is interesting to note that the two lateral posts sat on 15 cm of coarse sand rather than on the bedrock bottom of the hole. Similarly, the lower 15 cm of the center posthole was filled with coarse sand, and we presume that the post itself also sat on this sand.

The roof was built in the traditional manner, using primary and secondary beams mostly of Ponderosa and piñon pine, on top of which were small sticks and even some pieces of dressed wood. Based on the pattern of beam fragments (Figure 94), we believe there were two short beams (3.5–4.0 m long) or a single long one (ca. 8 m) resting on the three interior support posts and perhaps on posts in the north and south walls (in which case it would have been some 10 m long). Secondary beams 5 m long and up to ca. 15 cm thick extended from the east and west walls to this center beam line. Given the lengths of these spans, it is not surprising that most of the beams were of Ponderosa or piñon pine. We did not determine if the roof was flat or pitched, but it is possible that exposing the fallen north and south walls with such an objective would have yielded information about this detail.

Above the wooden portion of the roof was a layer of thatch, then a nearly solid layer of thin, tabular



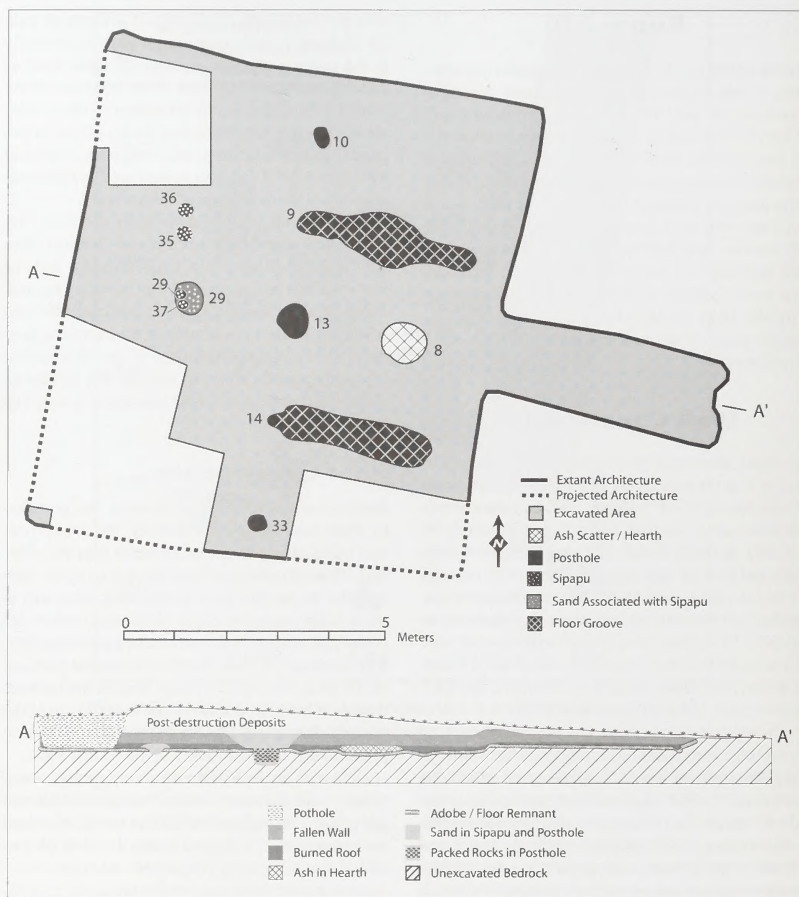


Figure 89. Plan and cross section of Room A16.

ryholite slabs, with 10–12 cm of adobe on top. The nearly solid layer of very thin slabs provided us with an unmistakable referent for making assessments of roof-adobe context; consequently, we are completely confident of the fact that a number of items (discussed below) were in roof adobe.

The roof adobe contained numerous sherds, animal bones, and other objects of the sort commonly found in construction adobe at Old Town. It also contained a fragmented pigment-grinding slab (all

recovered pieces refit but do not reconstitute the complete original slab), a relatively large number of shell bracelet fragments (a few of them burned, and no bracelet completely reconstructible); complete and fractured quartz crystals; shell beads; several stone palette fragments (none refit); one disk-shaped calcite crystal; one turquoise pendant; and possibly a stone bowl fragment (Figure 95; Table 14). Many of these objects were in the roof adobe within a meter or so of the hearth and center posthole. Because all excavated



Figure 90. View east at the portion of Room A16 excavated to floor in 1996.



Figure 91. Overhead photograph of Room A16 as excavated to floor in 1996.

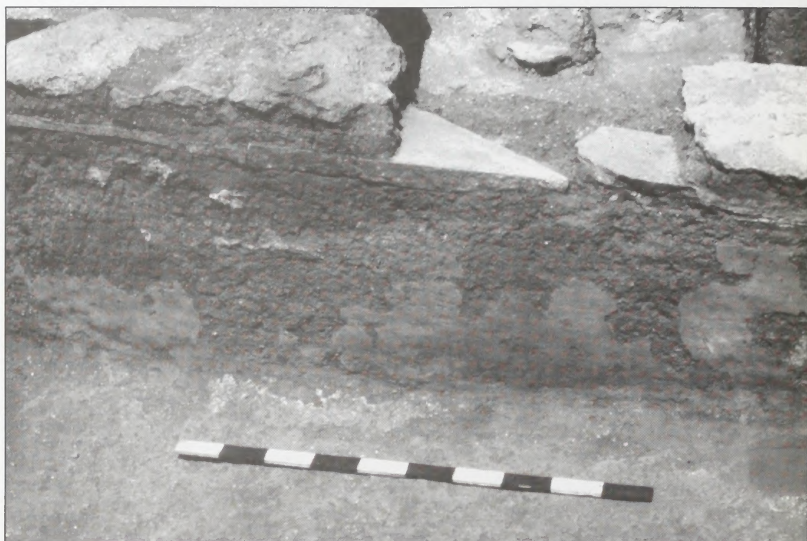


Figure 92. Remnant of the central section of Room A16's west wall (meter scale).

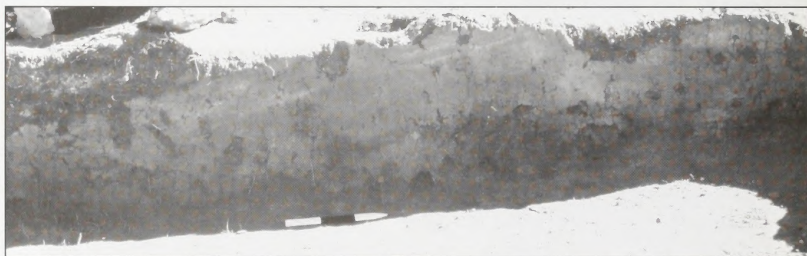


Figure 93. Remnant of the north wall of Room A16 with burned plaster and possible painted lines.

roof-fall was screened (using  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch mesh), we are confident that this concentration of jewelry and quartz crystals in roof adobe near the hearth and center post was actually part of the construction process and deliberately placed.

Moreover, there were several bracelet fragments and a quartz crystal in the sand at the bottom of the center posthole, but there were none in either of the other two postholes. Additional fragments of shell bracelets and quartz crystals were recovered

from the fill that had been placed in and above the center posthole after the post remnant was apparently removed. This fill contained broken-up, burned wall and roof material as well as numerous rocks, the latter particularly concentrated in the upper fill of the posthole. Given the presence of burned wall and roof material in this fill, it seems likely that the jewelry and crystals were also in the roof fall disturbed when the center post remnant was removed prehistorically.



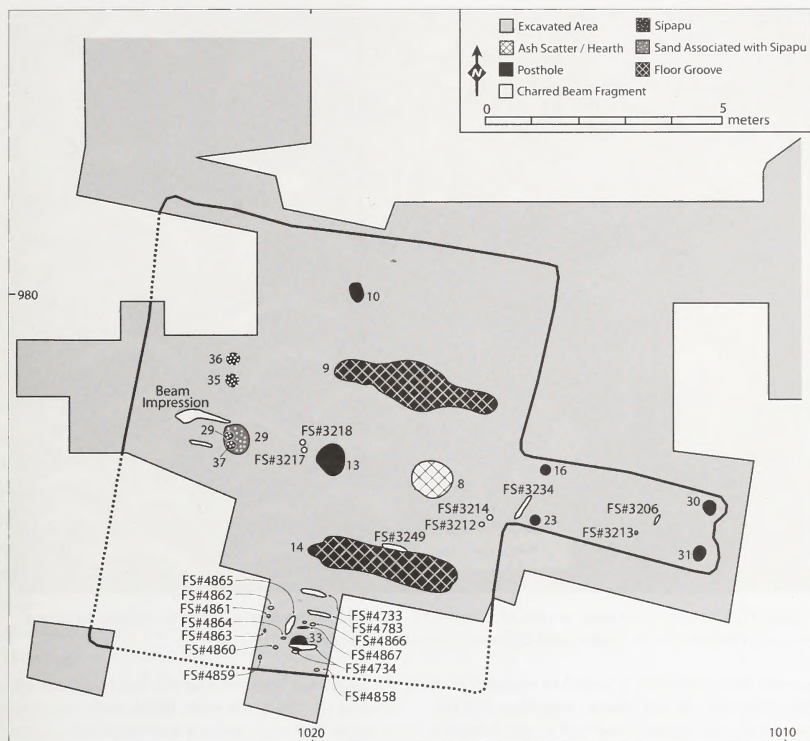


Figure 94. Plan of excavated portion of Room A16 with location of roof beams.

## Floors and Floor Features

In much of the excavated portion of Room A16, the floor was simply the bedrock bottom of the pit, but in the central portion, there were three layers of adobe above bedrock. Floor features include the oval hearth (Feature A16-8) (Figure 96), postholes (Features A16-13, A16-10, and A16-33), two floor grooves (Features A16-9 and A16-14) (see Figures 90 and 91), four sand-filled *sipapus* (Figure 97) and overlying low piles of sand, and partially buried in floor adobe, an inverted slab on which red pigment had been ground (Feature A16-17) (Figure 98). The location of these features is shown in Figure 89.

The floor grooves were long, shallow trenches dug into bedrock (see Figures 89–91). Much of their depth can be attributed to the rock and adobe rims,

but in no case was the depth from rim to bottom greater than 20 cm. The rims sloped gently away and merged into the surrounding floor adobe. The west end of each had an opening in the rim at floor level. Roof fall lay directly on the rims and bottoms of both floor vaults, as there was only limited evidence of planks in A16-14.

Three of the *sipapus* (Features A16-29, A16-35, and A16-36) originated from the upper floor (see Figure 97a), whereas the fourth, Feature A16-37, originated from the lower floor and was covered by the upper. It is possible that additional *sipapus* are present in the adjacent unexcavated portions of this structure. All four *sipapus* found to date are ca. 15 cm in diameter and 5–10 cm deep; the bedrock edges were smoothed and the bottoms rounded. As was the case with A16-29, *sipapus* Features A16-35 and A16-36



Figure 95. Selection of objects in roof of Room A16: palettes, stone mortar, quartz crystals, shell and turquoise beads and pendants, and *Glycymeris* bracelet fragments.

together were covered by a single low mound of river sand. Similarly, all four *sipapus* were filled with this same sand, and *sipapu* Feature A16-37 also contained a small stone pipe (see Figure 97, bottom).

It is important to emphasize that little of the floor adobe in Room A16 has been removed so far because we wanted to preserve the important linkages between floor layers and floor features. Given the finding of *sipapu* Feature A16-37 beneath the upper floor when it was removed in the west portion of the room, additional, but unexposed features may very well be present below the upper floor adobe in the already excavated portions. Although it seems improbable that basic structural features are hidden beneath floor adobe, undetected human and/or animal burials may be present, as may other *sipapus*.

## Entryway

The extended entryway of Room A16 was a trench 4.5 m long and 1.6 m wide that was dug 30–40 cm into bedrock (see Figures 90 and 91). Its bottom was more or less level and stepped down ca. 25 cm into

the room. On both sides of the entryway, narrow grooves (ca. 20–25 cm wide, 10 cm deep) were dug along the base of the bedrock to within about a meter of both inner and outer steps; these grooves were filled with crushed bedrock and gray silt. Although a small pothole had disturbed a portion of the entryway, it was possible to determine that the inner portion of the walls were directly above these grooves. Along one section on the south side, slabs set vertically in adobe were still in place and rested on the upper of two adobe floorings (the upper overlay the grooves). From this, we have inferred that the entryway was remodeled to some extent, but this remodeling could not be directly linked to floor and feature modifications inside Room A16. Posts were set on both sides of the entryway at both ends (see Figures 90 and 91) and apparently were exposed during use of the structure. It could not be determined if they were part of original construction or were perhaps added during remodeling. Either way, they effectively narrowed the passage at both ends of the entryway. Finally, a large, smooth, somewhat flattened river cobble had been placed in the middle of the passage at the base



Table 14. Provenience of Artifacts in and Adjacent to Room A16 (Unit 22)

Artifact Category	Room A16 Contexts (n = 140)									Other Contexts (n = 52)							
	On Floor	Floor Feature Fill	In Floor Adobe	Roof Fall	Roof and/or Wall Fall	Wall Adobe	Lying on Wall Fall	Entryway Fill	Mixed Room Fill and Overlying Deposits	Fill above Wall Fall	Zone C	Zone B/C	Zone B	Zone A	Extramural	Disturbed or Context Unknown	Total
Palette fragments	—	—	—	4	4	1	—	1	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	14
Ceramic pipe	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	2
Stone pipe	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Stone bowl/mortar	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Pigment-grinding slab	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Turquoise pendant	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Turquoise bead	2	—	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	7
Other turquoise	2	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4
Stone bead	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1
Shell ring	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Shell bracelet fragment	—	5	—	31	1	6	—	1	2	2	2	3	6	—	2	2	63
Shell pendant	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Bilobed shell bead	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	2
<i>Olivella</i> shell bead	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4
Shell disk bead	—	—	—	4	1	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	9
Unmodified shell	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Quartz crystal	—	5	2	33	—	—	—	—	1	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	43
Calcite crystal	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Mica	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	2
Concretion	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Pottery vessels	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Arrow points	—	1	—	1	—	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	—	2	2	17
Dart points	—	—	—	1	3	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	6
Barn owl wings	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Total	4	12	8	85	10	15	3	3	8	12	5	5	9	2	4	7	192



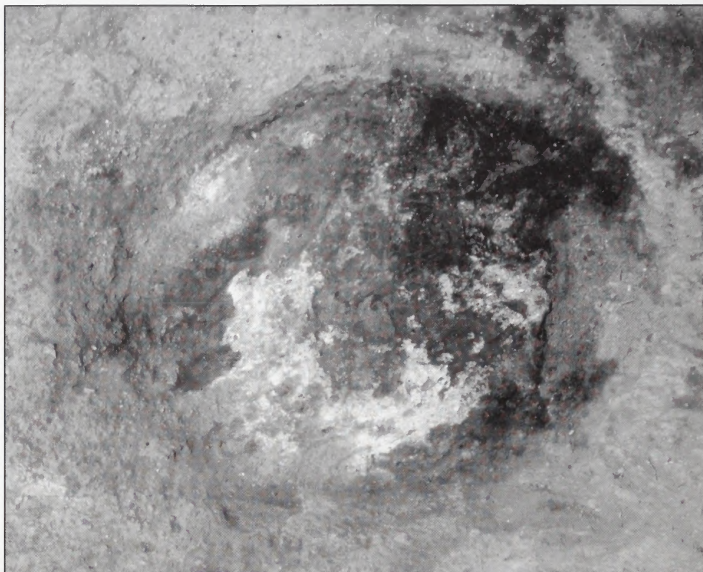


Figure 96. Room A16's hearth with ash.

of the outer step (and above pit feature A16-32); it apparently functioned as an intermediate step (see Figure 90).

### Dedicatory Offerings

As noted above, a number of objects are believed to have been placed in the roof and floor as dedicatory offerings (see Table 14; see Figure 95), most of them seemingly deliberately broken prior to being placed in the building fabric. These included a complete turquoise pendant, a shaped calcite crystal, shell beads as well as fragments of shell bracelets, quartz crystals, stone palettes, and pigment-grinding slabs. The complete specimens may have been part of composite objects. Most of the items placed in the roof adobe were concentrated in that portion directly above the central floor features, but one pigment-grinding slab was in the southern portion of the roof. Another was buried in floor adobe, inverted and perhaps broken in place (see Figure 98). It is significant that shell bracelet fragments and several small quartz crystal fragments were in the sand in the bottom of the

center posthole. It is entirely possible that additional objects of this sort remain in unexcavated portions of Room A16. In addition, a pair of barn owl wings was placed at the base of the southwest corner of the building (Figure 99). Clearly, the placement of certain objects, whether complete or fragmentary, in the construction material was important to those involved in building Room A16. Moreover, I believe that the breaking of objects such as the bracelets, crystals, palettes, and pigment-grinding slabs was intimately related to the construction of this special building.

### Destruction

Abundant evidence clearly indicates that Room A16 burned. This is seen in the burned interior wall plaster, the burned roof-support posts, and in the burned roof material that overlay the floor. Nowhere was there any accumulation of debris or fill between the roof fall and floor indicative of a period of nonuse; we therefore infer that the burning represents the deliberate destruction or retirement of the building. Because near-continuous wall fall lay directly on top

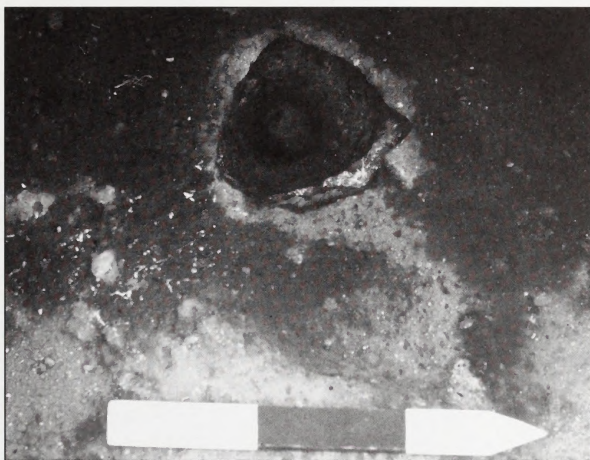
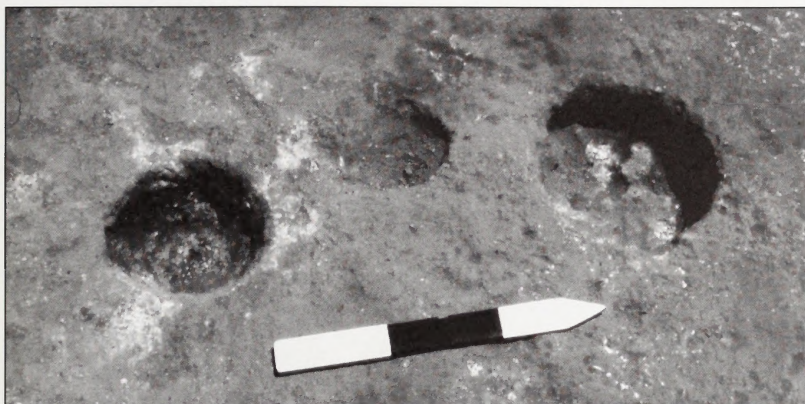


Figure 97. *Sipapus* in the upper floor of Room A16, overlying mounds and fill of sand removed (scale is 30 cm) (*top*), and Feature A16-37 with stone pipe in fall (scale is 30 cm) (*bottom*).

of roof fall along the excavated wall sections, we believe that the walls were deliberately pushed over into the room. We propose, thus, that the structure was burned, followed closely by toppling of the walls en masse. We cannot explain, though, how the structure could burn so completely that two major roof-support posts would be burned to floor level

without extra fuel, of which no evidence was found in the excavated portion.

With the toppling of the walls, the shallow Room A16 pit was effectively filled. At least two partially reconstructible pottery vessels (Three Circle Neck corrugated mug and Mimbres Black-on-white, Style II, naturalistic bowl; Figure 100a–c) lay on top of the



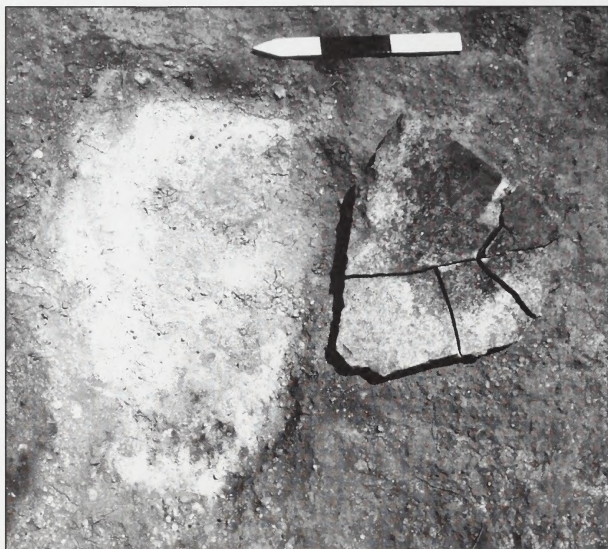


Figure 98. Feature A16-17, pigment-grinding slab fragments found in floor adobe of Room A16 removed, uprighted, and reassembled (scale is 30 cm).



Figure 99. Articulated bones from a pair of barn owl wings placed at the base of Room A16's southwest corner (two of the elements from the left specimen had already been removed prior to photography).





Figure 100. Partial pottery vessels associated with Room A16: (a) Large Mimbres Black-on-white, Style II, bowl on top of fallen wall; (b) Three Circle Corrugated mug containing wood charcoal on fallen wall; (c) Mimbres Black-on-white, Style I/II, bowl fragment in disturbed room fill near west wall.

fallen walls and may have been deposited as part of the destruction. The corrugated mug evidently was still a functional vessel (although not all of it was recovered) when deposited, as it clearly contained several lumps of wood charcoal. In contrast, as best we could determine, the painted bowl was deposited as mostly smaller sherds rather than as usable vessel portions.

As noted previously, there was no post remnant in the center posthole, nor was there continuous roof fall above it. Above the sand in the bottom, the posthole had been packed with rocks mixed with burned roofing material and burned wall plaster (Figure 101). From this, we infer that the post remnant was removed sometime after the destruction of Room A16. As discussed by Creel and Anyon (2003), the removal of this post remnant was not unique in Mimbres communal pit structures, but we have yet to discern its significance.

We do not know how soon after destruction the center post area was removed, although it seems likely that its location would have been readily ascertainable only until an overlying zone of extramural adobe surfaces and adobe-mixing basins began to accumulate. On this basis, we infer that the post was removed before the activities that resulted in the overlying zone of adobe surfaces took place. Evidently, soon thereafter, infilled Room A16 and the adjacent area were the scene of considerable extramural activity that resulted in multiple adobe surfaces.

## Dating of Room A16

Only four of the several hundred construction timber specimens recovered yielded tree-ring dates despite the fact that most were of datable species (note that most were relatively small pieces of charred wood). The most useful of the four are a probable cutting date of A.D. 873+v (Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research number MIM-803) on the Douglas fir roof-support post in Feature A16-10 and a date of A.D. 873vv for its counterpart, the Douglas fir roof-support post in Feature A16-33 (see Table 4). A specimen of piñon pine from the mixed wall and roof fall in the upper portion of the center posthole (Feature A16-13) yielded a non-cutting date of A.D. 861vv (MIM-801), and a piñon roof beam yielded a noncutting date of A.D. 858+vv (MIM-799). Together, these suggest a date of about A.D. 873 or 874 for procurement of the wood used in building this structure; presumably, actual construction followed within a year after the wood was procured.

Burned wall plaster yielded an archaeomagnetic date of A.D. 900–925 for the burning of Room A16 (see Table 5). This is consistent with other evidence and suggests that this building was used for no more than about 35–50 years.

## Possible Design Features Relating to Destruction

Certain aspects of Room A16 construction may have been intended to facilitate destruction of the building, insofar as they serve no other obvious purpose. The first of these is the deliberate placement of thin slabs horizontally in the lower wall where the northwest corner overlay roof and wall fall in Room A71. These slabs were placed in the wall adobe, there being no supporting rocks in the wall below, at the same level as adjacent undisturbed bedrock. We suggest that they were placed there to facilitate even breaking of the wall when it was pushed over en masse. Second, we suspect that construction of walls by vertical sheet-like applications of adobe served to keep each wall intact when it was pushed over; certainly, we can discern no structural reason for this kind of construction, especially given the poor quality of some of the adobe. In addition to bearing some of the weight of the roof, perhaps the smaller posts in the walls assisted in keeping the walls intact during toppling. None of these features necessarily reflects intentional design to facilitate destruction, yet they are difficult to explain otherwise and are consistent with such an interpretation. The fact that the massive walls of Room A16 were clearly laid over into the room en masse leads us to suspect that these aspects of construction may well have been design features. As discussed by Creel and Anyon (2003), many, if not most, other Mimbres communal pit structures may well have been destroyed in much the same manner as Room A16. If true, these possible design features imply that the destruction of at least some of these buildings was anticipated at the time of construction.

## Room A71

Room A71 is a large D-shaped communal pit structure partially overlain by Room A16 (Figure 102). Because of the limited nature of the excavations in Room A71 and the extensive array of earlier and later features (including potholes) that occupy the same space, we do not yet know its precise size or shape, nor do we have very complete information on some of the floor features.



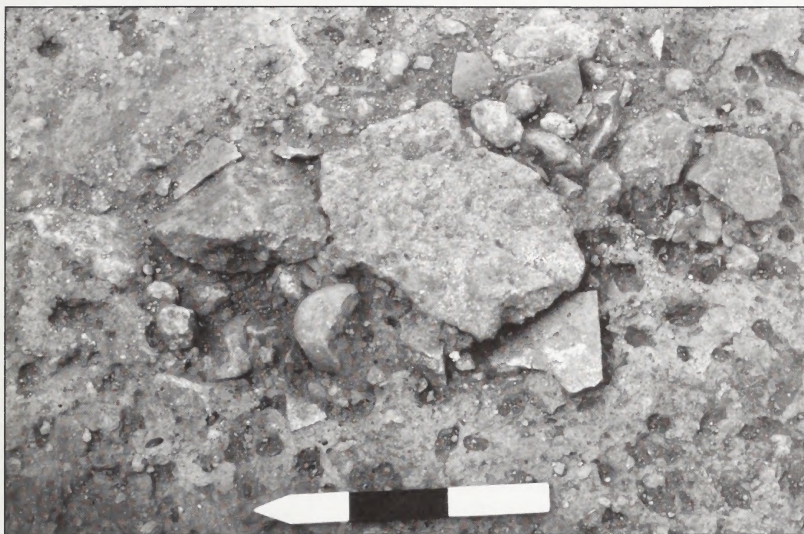


Figure 101. Center posthole of Room A16 as found at floor: posthole filled with rocks (top) and posthole excavated with rocks from fill at left (scale is 30 cm) (bottom).



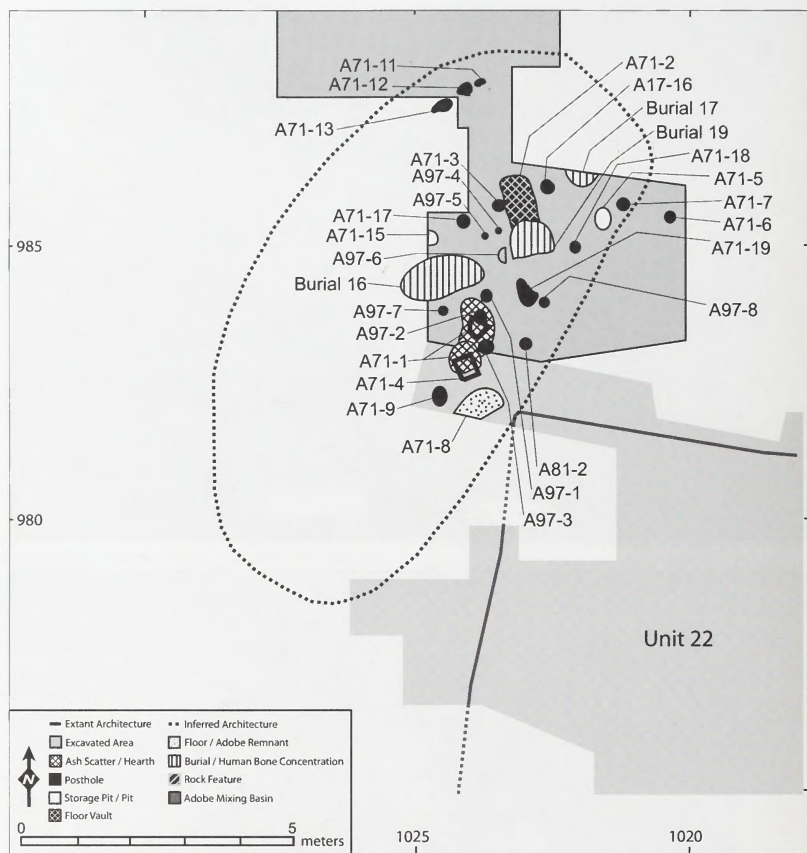


Figure 102. Plan of Room A71.

## Wall Construction

Like Room A16, Room A71 was built in a relatively shallow pit dug some 30 cm into tuff bedrock. As a result, most of this building was also above the level of the surrounding ground surface. The walls appear to have been built on the bedrock edge of the pit, much like those in Room A16, although in Room A71, the walls were clearly built of coursed adobe approximately 25 cm thick at roof height. Based on the horizontal location of wall fall and lack thereof,

the walls are estimated to have been at least 3 m high but probably not much higher.

One segment of fallen wall had a clear, unmistakable impression of a vertical post some 5–7 cm in diameter, but no definite postholes for such posts were identified, largely because little of the edge was exposed and much of it passed through preexisting features where postholes would have been difficult to recognize. As previously noted in the discussion of Room A16, setting posts vertically within the walls was a typical method of construction in most large

communal pit structures excavated in the Mimbres area. However, Room A71 is the only known large communal pit structure with vertical posts in coursed-adobe walls and, indeed, is the only one in the region known to have had coursed-adobe construction of any kind.

## Roof Construction

Based on relatively intact roof fall in the hearth area, the roof adobe was ca. 10 cm thick, lying on thatch, then sticks, then poles ca. 3 cm thick. There were no thin slabs between thatch and adobe, as was the case in Room A16. No remnants of larger beams were found during our limited excavations, the only charred material being a few cottonwood pole fragments, sticks, and thatch. We believe, therefore, that larger beams were removed prior to burning. This is true as well of the roof-support posts, at least to the extent revealed by postholes investigated so far. Indeed, because so little of the room was excavated, the exact number and placement of roof supports is unknown.

There was a clearly defined rectangular gap (Feature A71-4) in roof fall partially overlapping the hearth. It was not lined with slabs but was readily apparent in the fallen roof adobe. This surprisingly well preserved feature is interpreted as the vent in the ceiling above the hearth.

## Entryway

Nothing specific is known about Room A71's entryway, primarily because it appears to have been almost entirely destroyed by the construction of Room A16. The latter's north wall base slopes up slightly from west to east, so the entryway may be partially preserved as the bedrock base of this wall.

## Dedicatory Offerings

No possible dedicatory objects were found in floor adobe or underneath walls, but this is perhaps because of the comparatively modest excavations. One turquoise bead, five shell ornaments, and an arrow point were, however, found in roof and/or wall adobe (Table 15). In this case, we do not know if these were dedicatory objects or simply incidental inclusions.

## Floors and Floor Features

So far as is known, the central portion of Room A71 had two adobe floors over bedrock or over preexisting features. In the outer portion of the room that

was investigated, there was only one adobe floor. We infer that this is a result of heavier traffic and/or remodeling of features in the central portion of the room, essentially the same situation as in Room A16. We made an arbitrary decision to assign A71 subfeature numbers to those features associated with the upper floor or possibly intrusive into A71 (in the case of A71-10, a looted burial). There were several postholes clearly covered by the upper floor that were designated as Feature A97. Although some or all of these could relate to early use of Room A71, they could also be related to an entirely different, yet-to-be-defined structure. The quantity of charcoal in some of the A97 postholes and in A71-7, a modified posthole, suggest that the earlier structure, or early A71, burned to some extent.

As noted above, several features were clearly associated with the upper floor. These include a shallow, poorly defined, basin-shaped hearth (Feature A71-1) full of ash (and the ash pile extended well above and beyond the hearth) (see Figure 102), a possible floor vault, or foot drum (Feature A71-2), postholes and/or small pits, and a child burial (Burial 16, Feature A71-14).

Unfortunately, this child's (ca. 2.5 years old) burial had been looted, but most of the skeletal remains were still present in the disturbed fill of the pit. Despite the disturbance, this interment could clearly be linked with the floor of A71 because a remnant of floor adobe extended out over the pit edge. Thus it is evident that this child was interred during use of Room A71. Fine-screening of the disturbed burial pit fill yielded a number of shell disk beads and a small quartz crystal. Because the burial pit was so much larger than necessary to accommodate the small child, it seems likely that other objects were also interred with the body and removed by the pothunter.

It is important to note that no cranial bones or teeth were recovered from that portion of the feature excavated (and all fill was passed through window screen). Whether or not the cranium was present at interment is unknown, but it seems likely that some fragments would have been recovered had they been present, especially because much of the post-cranial skeleton was present in the disturbed fill. Burials interred beneath the floor in large communal pit structures while they were in use are uncommon in the Mimbres area. Only three definite cases are known, this one in Room A71 and two in Galaz Room 42A (Creel and Anyon 2003). In each, the individuals were young and buried without crania.

Table 15. Provenience of Non-Ceramic Artifacts in and Adjacent to Room A71 (Unit 22/32)

Artifact Category	Floor Feature	Room A71 Contexts (n = 48)				Other Contexts (n = 5)			
		In Floor Adobe	Roof Fall	Roof and/or Wall Fall	Wall Adobe	Mixed Room Fill and Overlying Deposits	Fill Postdating Wall Fall	Disturbed or Context Unknown	Total
Turquoise bead	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1
Shell bracelet fragment	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
Shell pendant	—	—	—	—	2	—	1	—	3
<i>Olivella</i> shell bead	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
Shell disk bead	40	—	—	1	1	1	—	—	43
Arrow point	1	—	—	—	1	—	2	—	4
Dart point	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Total	41	—	—	2	5	1	4	1	54





Figure 103. Burial 19, secondary deposit of skeletal remains on floor of Room A71.

A second burial (Burial 17) was only minimally investigated because it barely extended into our excavations. Given the limited excavation and disturbance, it was not possible to determine whether this adult burial was interred during use of Room A71 or was intrusive. In the small portion of this grave excavated, the only bones present were some of the distal phalanges of both feet, arrayed in anatomical order. Apparently, the other bones of the feet (and inferentially, the rest of the skeletal remains) were removed prehistorically. As discussed below, it is probable that this individual was exhumed and the bones later redeposited nearby on the floor of Room A71 (and designated as Burial 19) (Figure 103). The individual in Burial 19 was an adult male.

The potentially related questions of when Burial 17 was disturbed and when the set of skeletal remains designated as Burial 19 was emplaced, whether prehistorically or by a recent pothunter, have not been definitively answered. Our field assessment was that Burial 17 appeared to have been disturbed prehistorically because the overlying deposits seemed clearly to be intact. Burial 19, an essentially complete but unarticulated set of skeletal remains was in the bottom of a pit about a meter southwest of Burial 17; this

pit had been dug through the fill of Room 71 and the remains placed in the bottom, which was the floor of Room 71. There was most definitely recent pothunter disturbance immediately adjacent to Burial 19, but a prolonged consideration of the evidence led us to believe that Burial 19 was a prehistoric secondary interment, probably of the individual originally interred in the nearby grave designated as Burial 17. In part, it is the rather careful placement of the largely intact skeletal remains in the bottom of a relatively deep pit that led us to this inference, particularly because bones removed by pothunters from all other disturbed burials that we encountered were usually broken and haphazardly scattered about. Although we did find loose concentrations of human bone left by pothunters, none was as neatly and compactly placed as the remains of Burial 19. Ultimately, however, we cannot be certain of this situation, which is regrettable because of the potential implications if our assessment is correct.

## Destruction

As noted previously, there is some indication that the structure associated with Feature A97 postholes

burned, but it is not known if this was a completely different building than A71 or merely an earlier version. It is also clear from the burned roofing material and occasional piece of fallen wall plaster that Room A71 burned. We presume this to have been deliberate because there were no objects on the floor, there was no accumulation of fill or wash deposits on the well-preserved floor, and the larger construction timbers appear to have been removed prior to burning. That is, there was no beam fragment more than 3–4 cm in diameter (none yielded tree-ring dates), nor was any post remnant found in any posthole.

In the one relatively small area where we encountered intact deposits, the roof lay directly on the floor and preserved the large, prominent ash pile that overlapped the hearth. In the excavation around the hearth, it was clear that fallen walls lay directly on fallen roof, as there was no accumulation of wash or other fill between them. From this, we infer that destruction of Room A71 was rapid and complete, to the extent that the original pit was quickly filled with roof and wall material, a scenario very much like that of later Room A16.

## Dating

Given the lack of tree-ring dates from the few construction-beam fragments encountered, determining the date of construction presently rests on the ceramics in key contexts. Unfortunately, diagnostic sherds from meaningful contexts are few. Sherds are comparatively scarce in the small amount of undisturbed wall and roof adobe excavated so far, and they consist of 1 Alma Scored; 1 San Francisco Red; and 1 Mimbres Black-on-white, Style indeterminate; and 36 plain ware sherds. Undisturbed features attributed to Room A71 (as well as Feature A97) had even fewer sherds: 1 Alma Scored; 1 San Francisco Red; 1 Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III (presumed to be intrusive); and 2 plain ware sherds. The only other relevant sample is from Feature A81, a storage pit whose upper portion appears to have been removed during the excavation of the pit for Room A71 (see Figure 30). The floor adobe of Room A71 extended over Feature A81 and did not appear to be patched. Thus, the ceramic assemblage in its fill predates construction of A71. It contained mostly small sherds as follows: 2 Mimbres Black-on-white, Style indeterminate; 1 Three Circle Red-on-white; 3 San Francisco Red; 3 Alma Neckbanded; 5 Alma Scored; 1 smudged; and 50 plain ware sherds. Together, the ceramics from these contexts suggest construction sometime in the San Francisco phase or, less likely,

early in the Three Circle phase, perhaps in the late A.D. 700s or early 800s.

The date that Room A71 was destroyed is somewhat easier to estimate but must also be assigned without chronometric dates, because no suitable samples for archaeomagnetic dating were encountered. The fact that Room A16 partially overlies Room A71 means that the latter must have been destroyed by about A.D. 874, the apparent date of A16's construction. How much earlier cannot be determined with information that is currently available. In any event, we interpret the available evidence as indicating construction of Room A71 sometime around A.D. 800 and destruction prior to A.D. 874.

## Postdestruction Interment

One of the more surprising findings during excavations in Room A71 was a large pit containing a secondary interment (designated Burial 19). The description here assumes that Burial 19 was a prehistoric interment, but following from the discussion above, it is explicitly acknowledged that this could simply be a recent pothunter feature. As noted previously, Burial 19 lacks some distal phalanges of the feet, exactly those present at the edge of the nearby Burial 17 pit. Given this and the distinct similarity of the phalanges in Burials 17 and 19, it is entirely possible that they represent the same individual (Constance Judkins, personal communication 2000). If our contextual assessment is correct, while nearby Room A16 was in use, or perhaps shortly after its destruction, the pit for Burial 19 was dug in the fill of Room A71 through its fallen roof and walls to the floor. Because this pit was substantially deeper than the typical grave at Old Town, we believe that it was deliberately dug deep enough that the bones could be placed on the floor of Room A71. If this scenario is correct, as discussed in a later section, it was evidently important to keep the skeletal remains of this individual in contact with the remains of this special building, a situation that possibly presaged Burial 18 some two centuries or so later. On the other hand, it is possible that we misunderstood the complex deposits in this area, some of which were very clearly disturbed by pothunters. If so, it is possible that there is no significance to the set of remains designated as Burial 19.

No objects have been confidently associated with Burial 19, perhaps in part because it was a secondary interment. There were, however, several sherds, animal bones, and pieces of lithic debris in the fill near the bones, although no more than in the rest of





Figure 104. Sealed entryway of Room A67 in wall of Room A83.

the pit fill and other comparable deposits. The single object that is perhaps most likely to have been associated with the interment was a fragment of a mussel shell pendant.

## Room A67

Because excavations of this area were very limited, relatively little is known of this large pit structure. However, on the basis of three minor excavations, it seems clear that A67 was a round, semi-subterranean structure some 7 m in diameter (see Figure 88), with a projected floor area of approximately 38 m<sup>2</sup> exclusive of its entryway. Essentially nothing is known about floor features or possible artifacts, owing to the very limited exposure of floor, but it is reassuring that this structure seems to be largely undisturbed except for our minor excavations and limited prehistoric intrusions. The fact that it seems largely undisturbed and was burned renders it a prime candidate for future investigations of early communal pit structures in the Mimbres valley.

## Wall Construction

As is the case with later structures A16 and A71, Room A67 was built in a relatively shallow pit dug

some 30–50 cm into tuff bedrock, so most of this building was also above the level of the surrounding ground surface. Insofar as could be determined, the walls were likely built on the bedrock edge of the pit, and there was a suggestion (and that only) that they were masonry. Wall plaster was applied directly to the bedrock edge and presumably extended the full height of the wall.

## Roof Construction

Based on the exposures on the south and east sides, it appears that the structure burned and its roof fell directly onto the adobe floor. We encountered charred timbers and thatch amid adobe in both areas but exposed too little to determine much about roof construction.

## Entryway

Luckily, our investigation of adjacent room A83 led us to the entryway of Room A67. Clearly, the excavation of A83 removed all but 0.5 m of A67's entryway; the remainder had been sealed with masonry as part of A83 wall construction (Figure 104). In our investigation, we barely exposed the southern side of the entryway, but, in so doing, we found what is believed to be an adobe lobe like those noted by Anyon and



LeBlanc (1984:115) as common in Mimbres communal pit structures through the San Francisco phase. This lobe consisted of plastered adobe protruding perhaps 10 cm into the room immediately adjacent to the entryway. The entryway was approximately 60 cm wide where it had been cut by Room A83. Its original length is unknown.

## Floor and Floor Features

The floor was minimally exposed in the three excavations and consisted of clearly defined adobe in the south and east portions but was more poorly preserved on the north side. No floor features were found in the excavations.

## Destruction

Room A67 was destroyed by burning, presumably upon abandonment, as the burned roof lay directly upon the floor. Given the pattern of destroying Mimbres communal pit structures by burning noted by Creel and Anyon (2003), it seems likely that A67 was deliberately destroyed.

## Dating

As noted previously, there is some uncertainty in the documentation of the archaeomagnetic sample from A67's wall plaster. If the declination was included, the sample would yield a date in the mid-A.D. 600s; if not included, the  $\alpha_{95}$  does not intercept the Southwest Master Curve. A mid-A.D. 600s date would be consistent with dating of other round communal pit structures and is also consistent with stratigraphy, particularly the probable cutting of Three Circle phase (or possibly San Francisco phase) pit structure A59's entryway into the fill of A67. The only fill screened came from the north excavation, but the fill from within A67 was not separated from surrounding fill because it was not recognized that the low bedrock cut represented the edge of a structure. As a result, there is no meaningful ceramic sample from A67 on which to base a date estimate.

## Kivas

Until recently, it was believed that all of the so-called kivas in the Mimbres area were Classic in age, but the findings at the NAN Ranch site (Burden 2001; Shafer 2003) and Old Town have shown that this kind of structure was present by at least A.D. 900. Generally speaking, kivas as traditionally defined are distin-

guished from other small pit structures by the absence of an extended entryway and the presence of a ventilator (Anyon and LeBlanc 1984:137). Shafer (2003) has expanded the use of the term "kiva" to include Classic pueblo surface rooms with double hearths, but the only definite kivas found during our excavations were the Three Circle phase semisubterranean structures, Rooms A83 and B11, described below.

## Room A83

During three seasons of excavation, most of this pit structure has been excavated (Figures 105 and 106). The prehistoric excavation of its pit into bedrock removed part of great kiva A67's lateral entryway. The remainder of that entryway was sealed with masonry as part of A83 wall construction. Because the location of the ventilator/entryway was not excavated because of disturbance, we cannot be certain which of the following two possible architectural scenarios is correct: (1) a domestic pit structure with a lateral entryway (lower floor) was modified to be a kiva (upper floor, presumably with a ventilator), or (2) a kiva was remodeled. Both scenarios are possible, and neither can be dismissed with present data.

**Phase:** Three Circle

**Room shape and size:** Rectangular, 3.6 m north-south by 5.1 m east-west

**Depth of pit into bedrock:** 44 cm

**Floor area:** 18.4 m<sup>2</sup>

**Wall construction:** The one short section of preserved masonry wall was less than 1 m long and only some 40 cm high. It consisted of small tuff slabs set in very poor adobe, and the total wall thickness was ca. 25 cm. Wall plaster was applied directly onto the wall slabs and onto bedrock in the lower portion, where it rolled down into floor adobe. The quantity of masonry wall fall in the room indicates that the masonry was full height.

**Ventilator:** An adobe-lined ventilator approximately 30 cm wide and 50 cm deep was built into the north wall at floor level. Its upper portion on the west edge had been damaged by pothunting, but it clearly was a ventilator. On the east side, protruding from the facing ca. 10 cm above floor level was a charred wooden member some 4 cm in diameter.

**Entry:** Given the presence of a ventilator, entrance to the room is presumed to have been via ladder through a ceiling hatchway. However, it is also possible that this structure first had a lateral entryway and was a domestic building, later becoming a kiva

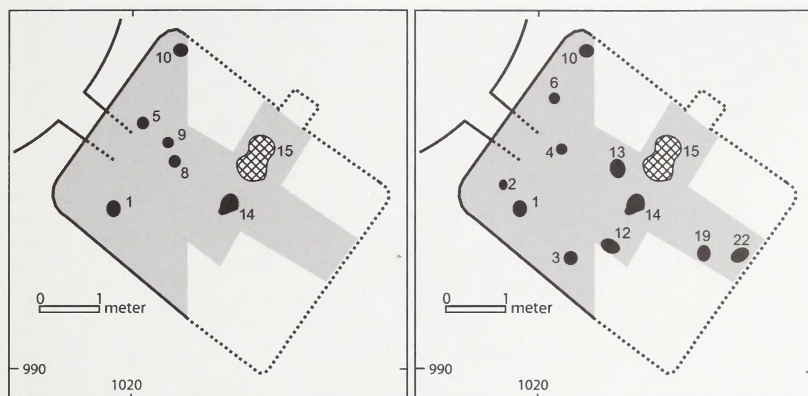


Figure 105. Plan of Room A83: lower floor (*left*) and upper floor (*right*).

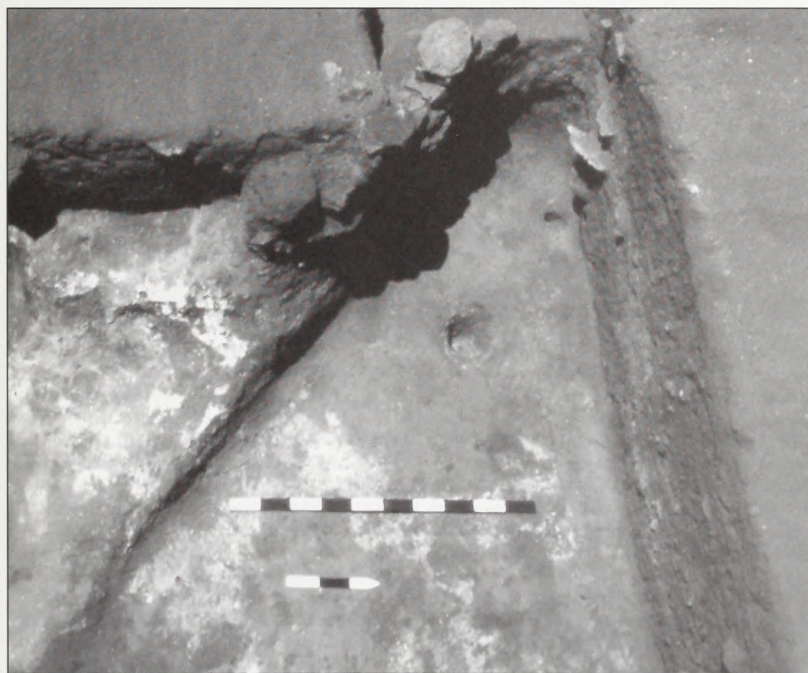


Figure 106. Southwest portion of Room A83; western corner is at top.

when the entryway was converted to a ventilator. This possibility can be neither confirmed nor refuted, as we did not excavate where an entryway presumably would have been.

**Floor:** Room A83 has two adobe floors, both of which roll up onto the walls. The first is a very thin, smooth layer applied directly to the bedrock. The second floor is 3–4 cm thick and was applied directly on the earlier floor.

**Hearth form and size:** Circular basin 40 cm in diameter, 7 cm deep, containing ashy fill

**Other floor features:** Room A83 has several roof-support postholes, most assignable to upper or lower floor. The central posthole in the first floor is partially intersected by the posthole in the later floor, which had a smooth green rock set flat in the bottom.

**Floor assemblage:** Substantial portions of three large, partially reconstructible Three Circle Neck Corrugated jars were recovered near and east of the hearth (Table 16). Much of a miniature Three Circle Neck Corrugated jar and a small plain ware olla with flaring rim were also recovered from the same part of the room (Figure 107). It seems likely that the remaining portions of these vessels are still present in the unexcavated eastern portion of Room A83. Four modified sherds were also found on the floor (see Table 16).

**Roof:** The original roof is presumed to have been built in the same fashion as the second one, but the pattern of roof-support posts differed (see Figure 105). Based on recovered beams and postholes, the remodeled roof support consisted primarily of one line of larger posts along the long axis of the room. Other postholes held posts only 5–7 cm in diameter (Figure 108); these may have been supplemental roof posts or perhaps supported furnishings. The roof was constructed of adobe on thatch, which was in turn supported by juniper and piñon vigas and *latillas*. In the area above the hearth, very thin, small slabs of rhyolite lay between the thatch and adobe, reminiscent of the roof in nearby Room A16. In the adobe were several large lumps of chalcedony that had thermally fractured as a result of the structure's burning. These were unusually large and are presumed to have been placed in the roof as dedicatory objects.

**Remodeling:** The two layers of floor adobe indicate that the floor and roof of Room A83 were remodeled during use, but we cannot determine whether this reflects modification of a domestic pit structure to be a kiva or simply remodeling of a kiva.

**Abandonment:** Given the presence of several vessels on the floor, it is believed that this structure

was deliberately burned upon termination of use. The burned roof lay directly on the floor, with no intervening accumulation of fill. In addition, the walls evidently fell onto the roof, possibly having been pushed over.

**Dating:** Numerous charred architectural wood samples, mostly juniper and piñon, were collected from the roof fall and upper set of postholes; none, unfortunately, yielded a tree-ring date. As is the case with Room A67, the archaeomagnetic sample from burned wall plaster in Room A83 had some uncertainty in the documentation and, at this time, has not clearly yielded a date. However, if declination is included in sample measurements, a date in the mid–A.D. 900s is indicated; if declination is not included, the  $\alpha_{\text{obs}}$  does not intercept the Southwest Master Curve. The set of vessels on the floor are Three Circle types, and the stratigraphic location of pottery types in this area is consistent with this dating. The few Classic period sherds found in the zones of wall and/or roof material were presumably deposited via bioturbation.

**Postabandonment:** With the destruction of Room A83 in the early A.D. 900s, the room pit became a shallow depression, which then filled with debris. At least portions of the walls were still standing at the time the Feature A51 platform was put in place. Excavation of the large pit for Burial 16 apparently destroyed the remainder of the southwest wall and removed some of the room fill (see Figure 43). Subsequently, the mass of fill designated Feature A69 was deposited above Room A83 as well as over the nearby great kivas and Burial 16. Based on the presence of Classic period ceramics in the A69 deposit, its placement over these structures must have occurred sometime late in the Classic period (Table 17).

## Room B11

Room B11 is one of the best-preserved and most informative pit structures excavated during the Old Town Project (Figures 109 and 110). It is the latest of three pit structures in the same location on the northwest side of a courtyard.

**Phase:** Three Circle

**Room shape and size:** Square; 4.5 m north-south by 4.5 m east-west

**Depth of pit into bedrock:** 40 cm

**Floor area:** 18 m<sup>2</sup>

**Wall construction:** The construction of Room B11 entailed the removal of B9's north and east walls (or their remnants) and lowering its floor some





Figure 107. Objects associated with Room A83: (a) palette fragment lying on floor; (b) calcite crystal in wall fall; (c) dart point in wall fall; (d) partially reconstructed plain ware jar on floor; (e) stone mortar in wall fall.

5–10 cm. All four walls in B11 were constructed of coursed adobe (Figures 111 and 112) and surprisingly, appeared to have been abutted rather than bonded. Massive vertical pours between 30 and 90 cm long were used for the base of the south and west walls. In places, these walls incorporated some of Room B9 wall fall, revealing that the new walls were built against the fill of Room B9. The north and east walls were built on the edge of the bedrock cut. Above their respective wall bases, the walls were constructed of horizontal pours approximately 15 cm high. All four walls are about 30 cm thick, including about 5 cm of

adobe plaster on the interior. There was evidence of a rectangular opening in the north wall of the room, located just west of the center of the wall, and approximately 50 cm above the bedrock cut. Although the location of this possible opening in the fallen wall was directly above the meal station (Feature B11-1), whose solid platform could have disturbed the plane of the fallen wall, there is unmistakable evidence of a lintel at the top of the opening and the outline of the opening is distinct.

**Ventilator:** A slab-lined ventilator approximately 40 cm wide and 50 cm deep was built into the south

Table 16. Objects Related to Room A83

Object Type	On Floor	In Walls/Roof	Mixed Walls/Roof and Fill Above	Fill Above	Total
Pottery vessels	5	—	—	partial (1)	6
Sherds	—	1,074	482	2,164	3,720
Worked sherds	4	—	4	10	18
Stone mortar	—	1	—	1	2
Stone pipe	—	—	—	1	1
Shaft straightener	—	1	—	—	1
Quartz crystal	—	—	1	—	1
Other crystal	—	3	1	1	5
Palette fragment	1	—	—	1	2
Concretion	1	—	—	1	2
Quartzite	—	—	—	1	1
Ground stone fragments	—	—	—	—	—
Mimbres arrow point	—	1	—	—	1
Cosgrove arrow point	—	—	—	2	2
Untyped arrow point	—	1	—	3	4
Untypable arrow point fragment	—	—	—	1	1
Dart point	—	1	—	—	1
Biface fragment	—	—	—	1	1
Shell bead	—	—	—	4	4
Shell bracelet fragment	—	1	—	3	4
Soapstone fragments	—	—	—	3	3
Total	11	1,083	488	2,198	3,780

wall of Room B11 at floor level. The south wall of Room B11 was set approximately 0.5 m north of the south bedrock cut for Room B9, presumably to create space for the construction of the ventilator. Fire-hardened adobe with pole impressions was located in the fill and presumably indicative of the lintel. The earlier floor of B11 extended into the ventilator. Before, or during, the application of the second floor, two "steps" or "shelves" of adobe were constructed in the back portion of this ventilator. These would probably have restricted the flow of air and suggest a modified use.

**Entry:** Entrance to the room was via ladder through a ceiling hatchway, as indicated by a pair of depressions in the floor and associated ladder-support stones just north of the hearth near the center of the room.

**Floor:** Room B11 has two adobe floors, both of which roll up onto the walls. The first is a very thin, smooth layer applied directly to the bedrock. The second floor is 3–4 cm thick and, in places, was applied over a small amount of fill lying on the earlier floor.

**Hearth:** Circular basin 40 cm in diameter, 10 cm deep (Figure 113). A flaked stone "hoe" is embedded in the adobe on the perimeter of the hearth (Figure 114; see Figure 113). Surrounding the hearth is a deposit of ash about 1 m<sup>2</sup> in area; it is present on both floors. This ash deposit is the only feature that can be clearly associated with the lower floor, but it is thick enough to be present on the upper floor as well.

**Other floor features:** Room B11 has several interesting floor features in addition to the roof-support postholes. As in Room B4, at least part of the floor

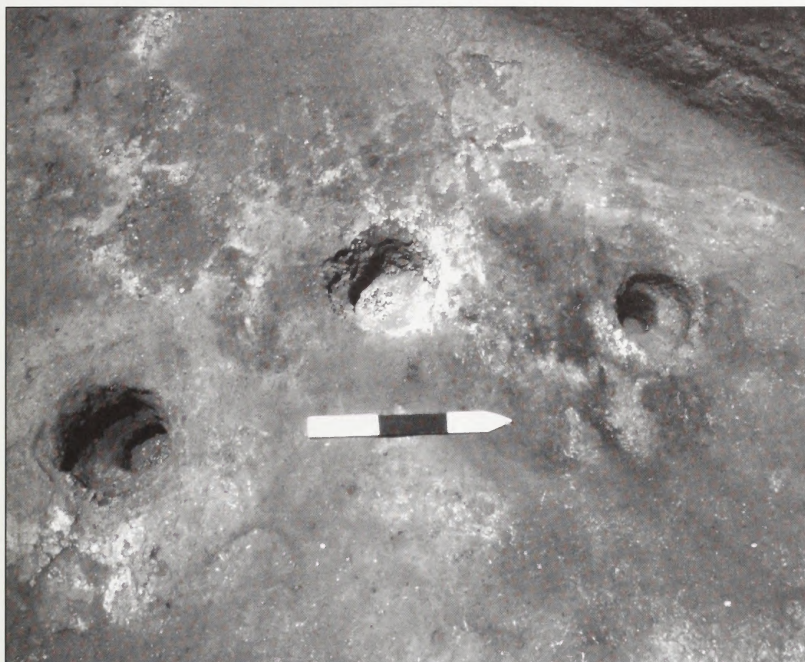


Figure 108. Postholes and postmolds in Room A83.

was covered by grass matting, mainly in the northeast quadrant of the room; remnants of this matting formed a thin layer of charred grass stems directly on the floor and distinct from the roof fall. Two small postholes in the northeast corner of the room (Features B11-25 and B11-26) may have related to interior furnishings of some type. In addition, a circular hole (Feature B11-13) about 2 m north of the hearth contained a fine silt matrix that differed from the fill of any of the postholes in the room. Because of its distinctive fill and the fact that it contained no charcoal or artifacts, Feature B11-13 has been tentatively identified as a *sipapu*. A mealing station (Feature B11-1) consisting of a slab metate on an adobe and cobble pedestal is located in the northwest portion of the room (see Figure 110). The metate slopes down toward the center of the room. A mano was recovered in situ on the metate, and nine other manos were found scattered on the floor in the northeast quadrant of the room.

**Floor assemblage:** A grooved stone maul and a smoothed slab of red andesite were recovered in floor context in the southwestern corner. Substantial portions of one Mimbres Black-on-white, Style I, bowl and one Style II bowl were recovered from the floor, and a reconstructible Three Circle Corrugated jar was recovered from the floor near the north wall in the northwest corner of the room (Figure 115). A plain ware miniature pinchpot olla (see Figure 115) was also recovered from floor context near the west wall of the room. Other items include worked sherds, hoes, and several manos, including one that has red pigment adhering to it (Table 18).

**Roof:** Based on recovered beams and postholes, the roof support apparently consisted of one line of larger posts along the central east-west axis and two series of smaller posts to the north and south of the central axis. Charred thatch and burned adobe with beam impressions clearly indicate that the roof was constructed of thatch and adobe, which was



Table 17. Occurrence of Ceramic Types in and above Room A83

Ceramic Type	In Walls and/or Roof	Vessels on Floor	Floor Feature Fill	Mixed Wall/Roof and Fill above	Fill above (Feature A69)	Total
<b>Pithouse period types</b>						
Alma Neckbanded	2	—	—	2	1	5
Alma Scored	5	—	—	2	9	16
Three Circle R/W	1	—	—	—	1	2
Mimbres B/W, Style I	17	—	—	8	48	73
Mimbres B/W, Style II	24	—	—	16	65	105
San Francisco Red	47	—	—	10	67	124
Three Circle Corrugated	94	4	—	20	195	313
Mimbres Plain	735	—	1	308	1,264	2,308
El Paso Brown	19	—	—	9	27	55
Punctated	11	—	—	5	5	21
Untyped incised	1	—	—	—	1	2
Untyped unslipped B/W	5	—	—	2	20	27
Plain jar	—	1	—	—	—	1
Mimbres B/W, style ind.	85	—	—	72	272	429
Subtotal	1,046	5	1	454	1,975	3,481
<b>Classic period types</b>						
Mimbres B/W, Style III	4	—	—	6	61	71
Mimbres Polychrome	—	—	—	—	1	1
Classic corrugated	21	—	—	29	123	173
Playas corrugated	—	—	—	—	4	4
Chupadero B/W	—	—	—	1	—	1
Subtotal	25	0	0	36	189	250
Total	1,071	5	1	490	2,164	3,731

Key: B/W = Black-on-white; ind. = indeterminate; R/W = Red-on-white

supported by vigas and *latillas*. As in the case in Room B8, a distinctive layer of sherds was exposed in the upper part of the roof fall and appears to have been incorporated into the roof. The evidence for a ceiling entryway and the presence of a Sacaton Red-on-buff scoop (Figure 116) lying directly on the roof fall indicate that the roof was flat and used as an activity area.

**Remodeling:** The two layers of floor adobe indicate that at least the floor of Room B11 was remodeled during use.

**Abandonment:** Several facts suggest that this room was deliberately destroyed, such as the previously

mentioned objects on the floor. Clearly, the room burned; its walls, roof, and some of the floor were thoroughly charred. Indeed, part of the north wall was fired brick-red, suggesting that fuel may have been placed in the structure to ensure its complete destruction. In addition, the burned roof fell directly onto the floor, and the walls then fell en masse onto the roof, one at a time, presumably having been pushed over.

**Dating:** A large number of charred architectural wood samples were collected from the roof fall, but only two of these yielded tree-ring dates (see Table 4), both of which were "vv." Although neither was a cutting date, they suggest that the earliest possible

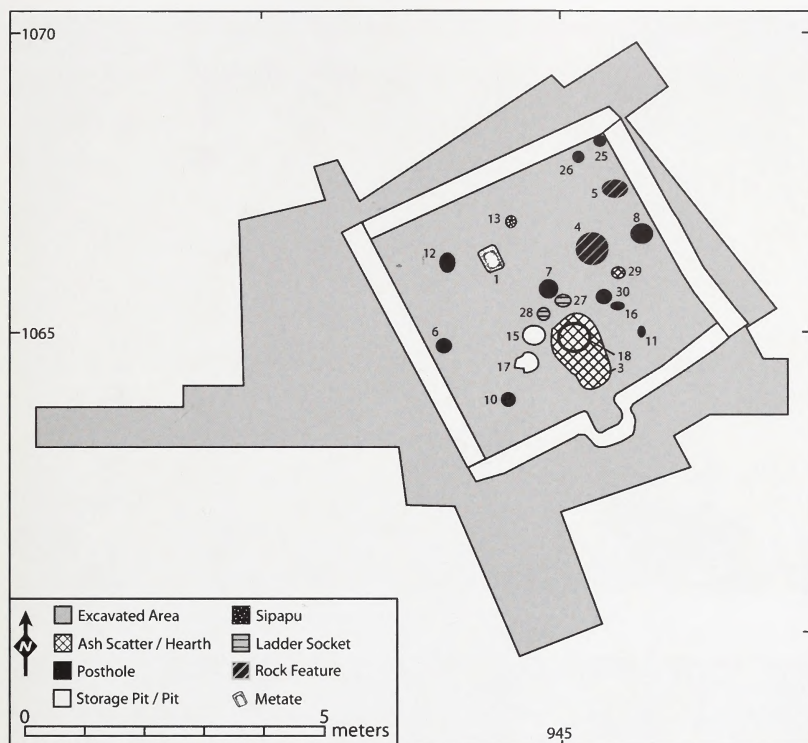


Figure 109. Plan of Room B11.

construction date of the room was A.D. 881. Archaeomagnetic samples collected from the burned plaster of the north and east walls yielded a date range of A.D. 710–740 (see Table 5), earlier than the tree-ring dates. The ceramic data (Table 19) are much like that for Room A83 and, together with the chronometric dates, imply that Room B11 was constructed in the late A.D. 800s, or possibly early A.D. 900s, and destroyed within about 50 years.

**Postabandonment:** With the destruction of Room B11, the room pit became a shallow depression, which then filled with debris.

## Room B9

Room B9, the earlier of the two known coursed-adobe structures in Area B, is the largest pit structure known

in Area B (Figure 117; see Figure 29). Although only a small portion of the room was excavated and over half of the room was modified during the construction of B11, meaningful information was still recovered on size, shape, and construction. As noted previously, this structure differed in proportions from any other found at Old Town, being twice as long as wide (Room A10 is similar but much smaller). Very few pit structures of these proportions have been found in the Mimbres area, but structures M, V, and AK at Wind Mountain (Woosley and McIntire 1996) are other notable examples. In their proportions, these structures resemble some Colonial and Sacaton phase Hohokam structures, and it is for this reason that Creel and Anyon (2003:85) have suggested that they provide one of several lines of evidence for interaction with the Hohokam in the A.D. 800s.



Figure 110. Room B11: view northeast (*top*) and view southeast (*bottom*).



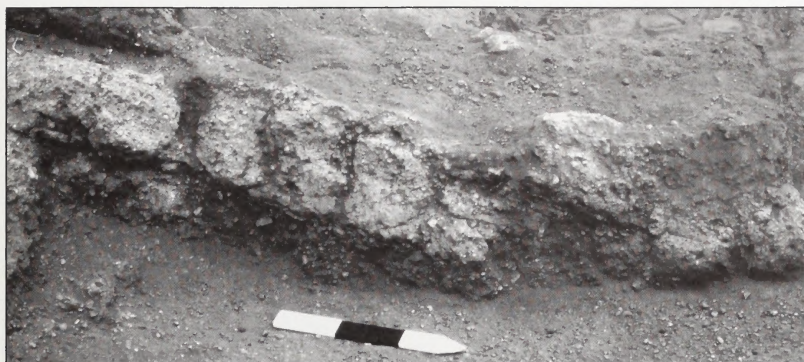


Figure 111. Section through fallen coursed-adobe wall of Room B11.



Figure 112. Standing remnants of southeast and southwest coursed-adobe walls in Room B11. Mano on raised metate at lower right.

On the other hand, it is conceivable that Room B9 was simply a Mimbres communal pit structure, possibly in part contemporaneous with Room A16 (and perhaps A71?), but smaller and of different proportions. The fact that kiva B11 was built over B9 is suggestive of special function.

**Phase:** Three Circle

**Room shape and size:** Rectangular; 4.7 m north-south by 9 m east-west

**Depth of pit into bedrock:** ca. 30 cm

**Floor area:** 41 m<sup>2</sup>

**Wall construction:** The walls of Room B9 were constructed of 30-cm-thick coursed adobe above the bedrock cut.

**Entry:** Room B9 has an expanding entryway extending over 2 m to the southeast. The walls of the entry-

way are pole and adobe, with adobe plaster on the interior.

**Entry ramp length:** 2 m

**Entry ramp width:** 30 cm, expanding to 50 cm

**Entry ramp orientation:** Southeast

**Floor:** Although the floor is poorly preserved, it appears that the room had only one adobe floor, which was applied directly onto the bedrock.

**Hearth form and size:** No hearth was discovered in the excavated portion of the room; however, presuming that the hearth, if present, was located just in front of the entryway, it was probably destroyed by the construction of Room B11.

**Other floor features:** The room has eight definite postholes and three possible postholes. Some of these, which are quite shallow, were discovered after the floors of Room B11 had been removed; they evidently

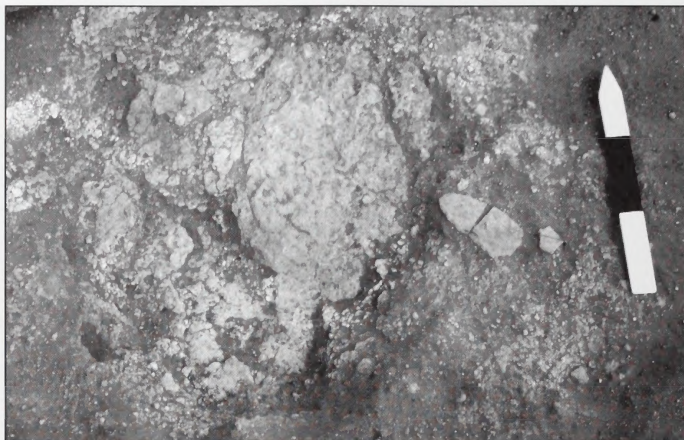


Figure 113. Hearth basin in Room B11, ash removed; flaked stone "hoe" in floor adobe at right.

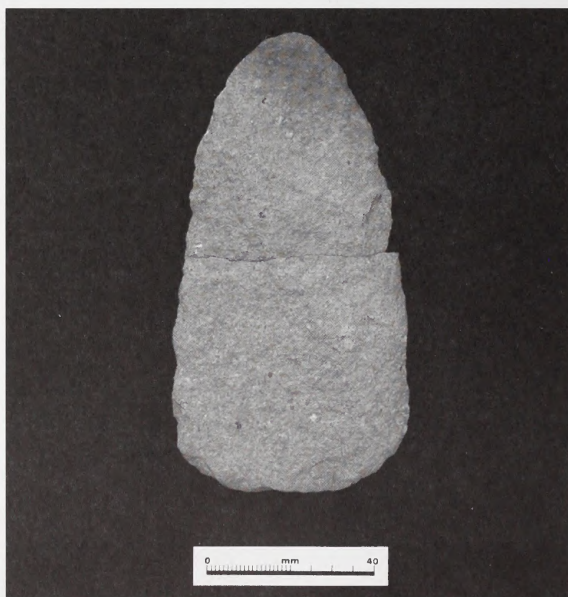


Figure 114. Flaked stone "hoe" in floor adobe adjacent to hearth in Room B11.



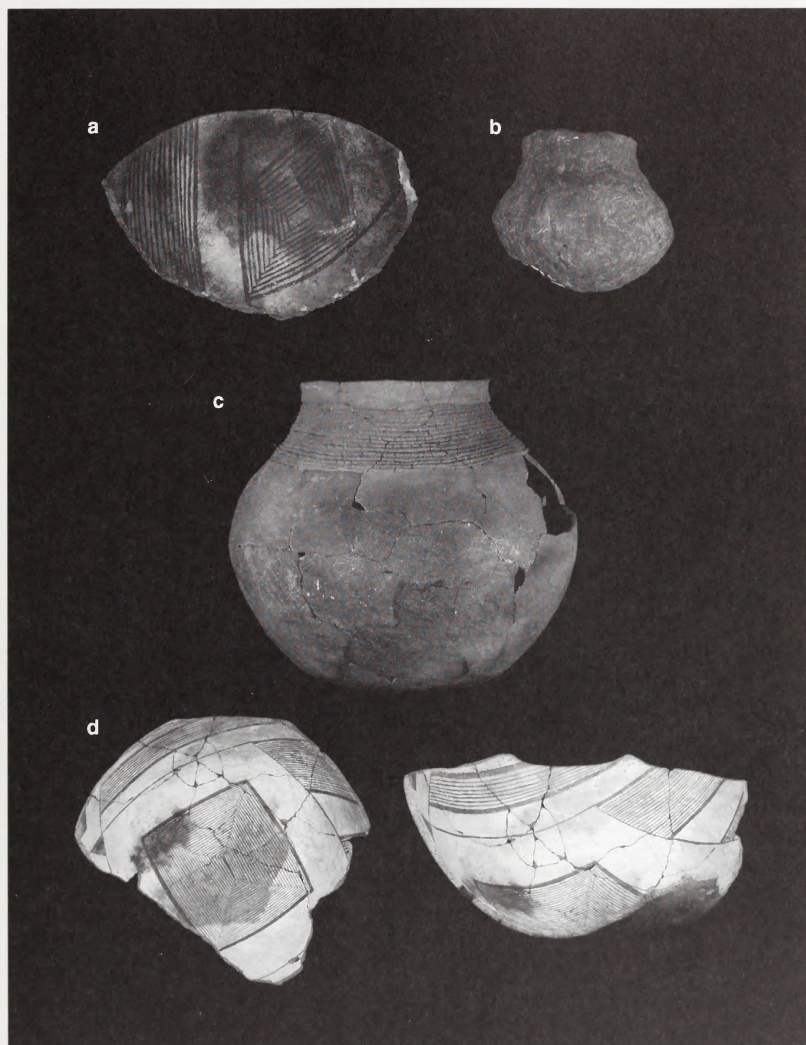


Figure 115. Whole and partially reconstructed pottery vessels on floor of Room B11: Mimbres Black-on-white, Style I, bowl (a); plain pinch pot (b); Three Circle Corrugated jar (c); Mimbres Black-on-white, Style II, bowl with rim peaks (d).



Table 18. Artifact Types in and above Room B11

Object Type	On Upper Floor	Fill Between Floors	On Lower Floor	In Floor Features	On Roof	In Walls/Roof	Fill Above Wall Fall	Total
Pottery vessels	4	—	—	—	1	—	—	5
Sherds	130	53	10	32	—	680	243	1,148
Worked sherds	5	—	—	—	—	6	—	11
Stone bowl/mortar fragment	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2
Stone pipe fragment	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2
Stone hoe	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	4
Turquoise	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
Quartzite	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Grooved maul	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Metate	3 <sup>a</sup>	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Manos	10	—	—	1 <sup>b</sup>	—	—	—	11
Mimbres arrow point	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Untypable arrow point fragment	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Untyped dart point	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
Biface fragment	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Shaped wood	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
Shell bracelet fragment	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
Modified animal bone	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Andesite slab	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Slab	6	—	—	—	—	—	—	6
Green pigment	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
Mineral	1	—	—	—	—	1	2	4
Total	169	54	10	33	1	695	246	1,208

<sup>a</sup>One complete metate on stand.<sup>b</sup>Red pigment adhering.



Figure 116. Sacaton Red-on-buff scoop on top of fallen roof of Room B11.

had been truncated during the construction of Room B11 (see description in this chapter). The base of a charred post is still in posthole B9-2. Against the south wall in the excavated portion of B9 that was not disturbed by the construction of B11, a cache of chert, chalcedony, and obsidian flakes was discovered just east of the entryway (Feature B9-14). The cache was buried beneath the adobe floor and was flanked on the eastern and western edges by a sherd set horizontally in the floor adobe. Small turquoise fragments recovered from the fill immediately above the cache may have been associated with it.

**Floor assemblage:** No items were found on the floor.

**Roof:** Based on recovered beams and posts as well as the location of postholes, the roof appears to have been supported by three large posts along its east-west axis centerline. Two sets of smaller posts probably paralleled these to the north and south.

**Remodeling:** There is no evidence for the remodeling of Room B9.

**Abandonment:** That Room B9 appears to have been intentionally abandoned is suggested by the absence of complete or usable artifacts on the floor, although only a portion was exposed during excavation. However, because the large size of Room B9 implies that it may have been a special-function room, the paucity of intact floor artifacts does not necessarily indicate

Table 19. Ceramic Types in and above Room B11

Ceramic Type	On Lower Floor	Fill Between Floors	On Upper Floor	In Floor Features	On Roof	In Walls/Roof	Fill Above Wall Fall	Total
<b>Pithouse period types</b>								
Three Circle R/W	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	2
Mimbres B/W, Style I	—	1	5	1	—	22	2	31
Mimbres B/W, Style II	3	4	13	—	—	17	10	47
Mimbres B/W, style ind.	1	6	11	4	—	50	32	104
San Francisco Red	—	—	—	1	—	12	5	18
Red-slipped, smudged ind.	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Three Circle Corrugated	—	6	19	2	153	21	—	201
Mimbres Plain	6	35	86	24	—	413	164	728
Untyped red-on brown	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Untyped, unslipped B/W	—	1	—	—	—	1	2	4
Untyped incised	—	—	—	—	—	8	1	9
Punctated	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	3
Sacaton Red-on-buff	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1
Subtotal	10	53	134	32	154	548	219	1,150
<b>Classic period types</b>								
Mimbres B/W, Style III	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	3
Subtotal	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Total	10	53	134	32	154	548	222	1,153

Key: B/W = Black-on-white; ind. = indeterminate; R/W = Red-on-white



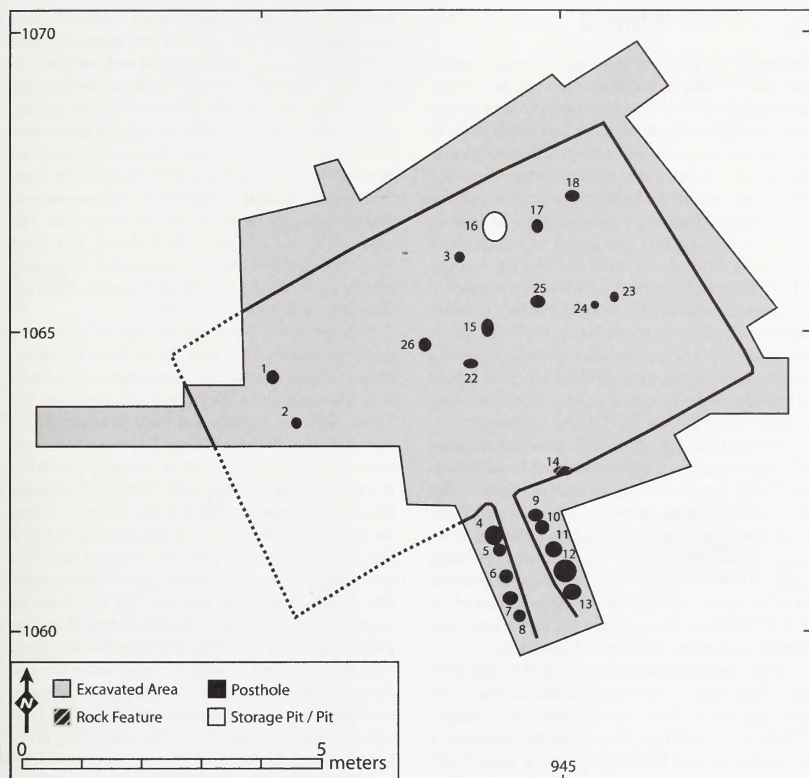


Figure 117. Plan of Room B9.

intentional abandonment. Charred wall plaster (none still in place), roof beams, and a post in posthole B9-2 indicate that the building was destroyed by fire. It is possible that Room B9 was abandoned and destroyed in preparation for the construction of Room B11, a small kiva.

**Dating:** Thirty-three charred wood specimens, presumably all architectural members, were recovered and submitted for dendrochronological dating, but none yielded a date. Insufficient plaster was present for archaeomagnetic sampling. Room B9 predated Room B11, which is believed to have been constructed in the late A.D. 800s, probably sometime after A.D. 881. This and the lack of remodeling imply that Room B9 was probably constructed in the mid- to late

A.D. 800s and destroyed prior to A.D. 900.

**Postabandonment:** It is possible, but cannot be verified, that the walls of Room B9 were intentionally toppled to allow for the construction of Room B11. Regardless, the floor in the eastern half of Room B9 was destroyed during the removal of an additional 5–7 cm of bedrock for Room B11's floor. In this area of Room B9, the bedrock bases of the northern and eastern walls were also expanded slightly. This is especially evident in the southeast corner of the room, where the bedrock cut for Room B11 is approximately 10–15 cm wider than the remaining Room B9 bedrock cut. The removal of B9's floor presumably destroyed any shallow floor features in its eastern half, including the hearth.

## Unit 2

The large, ca. 12–13-m-diameter depression on the east side of Area A, prominent in even the earliest descriptions of Old Town, was thought to be a large communal pit structure when we first began work. In two different seasons, we undertook limited excavations in the area but found no good evidence that the depression marked the location of a former structure (see Chapter 3 for details on excavations in Unit 2). As noted in Chapter 3, we found no recognizable floor, wall, or roof remnants, nor was the bedrock bottom even and smoothed as it was in a number of pit structures elsewhere at the site. The lack of architectural remnants was perplexing, given the extensive surrounding ring of spoil and the noticeable gap in that ring on the east side, both of which are quite typical of non-masonry-walled pit structures at Mimbres sites (at least where not covered by later buildings).

It is interesting to note that the presence of unusually large numbers of objects like shell bracelet fragments and stone bowls/mortars is suspiciously similar to the artifact counts in Room A16, the large Three Circle phase communal pit structure described previously. Indeed, the density of such objects is probably higher in Unit 2 than any other context investigated so far at Old Town and most comparable to the roof adobe of A16. Moreover, these objects are, for the most part, fragmentary, as was the case in Room A16.

Thus, I cannot dismiss the possibility that there was a large special semisubterranean structure in the large depression tested by our Unit 2 excavations. Otherwise, it is difficult to explain the presence of the depression and surrounding ring of spoil. If this was actually a semisubterranean structure, its floor would have been quite shallow, barely below ground surface, and its walls perhaps rather insubstantial (unless removed entirely).

## Overview of Special Buildings

Information on the large communal pit structures in the Mimbres area was recently synthesized by Creel and Anyon (2003), and the reader is referred to that article for details. A similar, although much more limited, synthesis of Mimbres small kivas is presented below, followed by a few additional comments on both types of special buildings.

Initially, it is perhaps worth considering terminology, particularly the appropriateness of the term

“great kiva” in the Mimbres area. Archaeologists have long known that most of the unusually large pit structures in the area were built and used prior to A.D. 1000, although a very few such structures appear to have been built shortly afterward. In this context, Anyon and LeBlanc (1984:85) argued reasonably enough for use of the term “large communal pit structure” rather than “great kiva” because the latter required or implied the existence of contemporaneous smaller kivas, and none was known at that time. The excavations at Old Town, NAN Ranch, and Wind Mountain, as noted earlier in this chapter, have since clearly shown that there were small kivas in Mimbres sites at least as early as A.D. 900.

Regardless of one’s terminological preference, the important issue is that, for at least a century, some Mimbres communities simultaneously had both large and small kivas. This is best documented at Old Town, where it appears that large structure Room A16 and kivas Rooms A83 and B11 were all at least somewhat contemporaneous in the early A.D. 900s. Rooms A16 and A83 were only 10 m apart, whereas Room B11 was nearly 100 m to the northeast. Given the limited sample of Three Circle phase remains at Old Town, there is every reason to suspect that there were other contemporaneous kivas elsewhere at the site. If one projects the presence of a half-dozen or so groups of pit structures like that in Area B for any given time in the A.D. 900s, it is plausible that there may have been just as many kivas for other areas in the community. One can thus envision several clusters or courtyard groups of domestic pit houses, at least some of which also had a kiva. On a community level, it is presumed that there was just one large special pit structure, or great kiva, at any one time.

## Small Kivas

In our comparative assessment of Old Town pit structures Rooms A83 and B11, the available information on excavated kivas in the Mimbres area has been reassessed (see Table 19). This included evaluating field notes for those poorly described in published form or not published at all. It is not surprising that the greater number of examples excavated subsequent to the comprehensive assessment by Anyon and LeBlanc (1984) permits slightly different conclusions.

First and foremost, it seems clear that some of the kivas previously thought to be Classic in age definitely or probably date to the Three Circle phase (Table 20). In the available sample, seven seem securely dated to this phase, and two others may well be Three Circle kivas. The two kivas from Old



Table 20. Attributes of Mimbres Kivas

Site	Structure	Age	Attached?	Orientation	Wall Construction	Remodeled Pit House	Hearth	Floor Area (m²)	Burned?	Burials	Objects on Floor/ Comments
Mimbres Valley											
Bradsby	1	Classic	yes	W	masonry	no		16.2	no		
Galaz	107a	Classic	no	NE	masonry	no	oval, adobe	11.5	no	1	
Galaz	107b	Classic	no	NE	masonry	no	round, adobe	11.5	no		
Galaz	107c	Classic	no	NE	masonry	no	none	11.5	no		Style III bowl
Mattocks	48	Classic	no	S	masonry		rectangular, slabs	15.2	no	3	metate; manos; six axes; shell pendants; bracelets
Mattocks	410	Classic	no	W	masonry	yes	round, adobe	13.8	no		
NAN Ranch	91	Late Three Circle	no	E	adobe	no	round, adobe	20	yes		
NAN-16	kiva	Three Circle?	no	SE	masonry	yes	round, adobe	10.6	yes		pottery vessel(s)?
Old Town	A83	Three Circle	no	NE	masonry		oval in bedrock	14.7	yes		pottery vessels; palette
Old Town	B11	Three Circle	no	SE	adobe	no	round, adobe	18	yes		pottery vessels; metate/mano; maul, etc.
Rock House	F7	Late Three Circle	no	NNE	masonry	yes	rectangular, slabs	11.6	no	2	
Rock House	F8	Three Circle	no	SW	adobe?	yes	round, adobe	11.6	no		
Arenas/Cameron Creek											
Cameron Creek	118	Classic	no	E	masonry	yes	rectangular?	» 20	no	8	
Cameron Creek	17	Classic	yes	S	masonry	yes	uncertain	» 12	no	5	mano
Cameron Creek	127	Classic	yes	S	masonry	yes	uncertain	13.7	no	19	
Cameron Creek	112	Classic	yes	SE	masonry	yes	rectangular, slabs	18.1	no	13	pottery vessels
Cameron Creek	105	Classic	yes	SW	masonry	yes	rectangular	13.3	no	18	pottery vessel; bench
Treasure Hill	NH 6	Classic	yes	S	masonry, posts	no	rectangular, slabs	14.3	yes	1	pottery vessels; metates; mortar; maul
Treasure Hill	EH 8	Classic	yes	W	masonry, posts	no	rectangular, slabs	14.6	yes	6	pottery vessels
Whiskey Creek	kiva	Classic	yes	S	masonry	no	shape uncertain	20.8	no		metate; "pottery dog?"

continued on next page



Table 20. (cont.)

Site	Structure	Age	Attached?	Orientation	Wall Construction	Remodeled Pit House	Hearth	Floor Area (m²)	Burned?	Burials	Objects on Floor/ Comments
Gila River Drainage											
Diablo (LA 6538)	F7	Classic	possibly	WNW	masonry, posts	no	rectangular	16.8	no		pottery vessel; maul fragment
Dinwiddie	F11	Classic	yes	E	masonry, posts	no	rectangular	13.3	no		slabs
Dinwiddie	F14	Classic	no	E	masonry, posts	no	rectangular, slabs	12.8	no		
Glenwood	kiva	Classic	no	NW	adobe (?), posts	no	rectangular plaster	16.3	no		
Pine Creek	4	Three Circle?	no	NE	masonry, posts	no	round, adobe	15.9	yes		slab
Saige-McFarland	Pit House 3	Late Three Circle	no	E	masonry	no	round, adobe	5.7	no		pottery vessels; mano/metate
West Fork	Pit House 10	Classic	no	SSW	masonry	?	rectangular	16	yes		originally designated Feature 40a; built inside Feature 40b
West Fork	Pit House 6	Classic	yes	N	masonry	no?	oval, adobe	9.8	no		originally designated Feature 28
West Fork	Pit House 11	Classic	no	SSW	masonry	?	rectangular	21.7	no		originally designated Feature 40b
Wind Mountain	3	Classic	yes	NW	masonry, posts	no	rectangular, slabs	9.1	no		
Wind Mountain	15	Classic	yes	S	masonry	no	rectangular, slabs	9	no		
Wind Mountain	P2	Classic	no	SE	masonry, posts	yes	rectangular, slabs	18.2	no		
Wind Mountain	V	Late Three Circle	no	E	adobe, posts	no	round, adobe	15.3	yes		



Town are the only ones with chronometric dates supporting this age assessment.

Regardless of age, most kivas had masonry walls, and the remainder, adobe. Only Room B11 at Old Town definitely had coursed-adobe walls. Floor areas ranged from 5.7–20.8 m<sup>2</sup> and exhibited little difference by age. As is the case with domestic pit houses, hearths in Three Circle kivas were predominantly round/oval but were mostly rectangular in the Classic.

In general, orientation (hearth-ventilator) is far less patterned than for large communal pit structures, as there is at least one kiva oriented in every basic direction. However, Three Circle phase kivas are predominantly oriented to the east, northeast, or southeast; only one is oriented to the southwest (see Table 20). In contrast, Classic kivas are quite variable, although there is a notable lack of any oriented to the north in the Cameron Creek and Arenas Valley (Treasure Hill) areas. This is true regardless of whether the kivas were attached to room blocks or not.

One of the most interesting differences is in the apparent practice of destruction by burning. Although only two, and perhaps three, Classic period kivas appear to have been burned, at least six of nine (67 percent) of the definite or possible Three Circle phase kivas were burned. This is a somewhat lower percentage than for contemporaneous Three Circle phase large communal pit structures but is not greatly different. Few have recorded evidence documenting whether the walls had been pushed over en masse onto the fallen roof, but this clearly happened with the two small kivas, as well as large structures A16, A71, and probably A67 at Old Town. In many cases, the field notes record wall rocks low in the fill of kivas at other Mimbres sites, particularly in those that were burned.

Substantially more Classic kivas had subfloor burials (9 of 23 vs. 1 of 8 Three Circle), and most of these kivas were at the Cameron Creek and Treasure Hill sites (Bradfield 1931; Cosgrove 1923). Only 2 or 3 contained items that might be considered dedicatory objects as defined in Chapter 2 (“hoes” in B11; calcite crystal, dart point, and large lumps of chalcedony in walls/roof of A83; and a pot full of crystals in NAN Room 91). Whether others did is difficult to determine. Relatively few had objects on the floor, and when they did, regardless of age, the objects were mostly pottery vessels, much as was the case with large communal pit structures in the Mimbres area. Metates and other objects such as grooved mauls and a palette were also present in some cases. It is

presumed that these objects were deliberately left in the rooms when they were destroyed.

## Summary

There are many similarities over time between the large communal pit structures and kivas in the Mimbres area. For example, during the Three Circle phase, both large communal pit structures and kivas were oriented toward the east, but orientation became quite variable in the Classic. In addition, the destruction of these special structures by burning is largely a Three Circle phase phenomenon (excluding here the earlier great kivas). Thus, although the construction and use of both large and small special pit structures continued into the Classic period, notions of how to orient the structures, as well as how to build and retire them, changed somewhat.

Our analysis of extant data on the small kivas has suggested that there may have been certain objects placed as offerings or dedicatory objects in the fabric of the building at construction. We found objects such as crystals, “hoes,” large pieces of chalcedony, and even an early Archaic/late Paleoindian projectile point in the floor, walls, and/or roof of Rooms A83 and B11. In some cases, their presence in these contexts may be purely coincidental, but in others, the placement seems more certainly to have been deliberate. In this sense, there are parallels in the presence of fragmentary shell bracelets, palettes, stone mortars/bowls, pigment-grinding slabs, crystals, and other objects in the construction fabric of the great kivas (see discussion in Creel and Anyon [2003:75–76]). However, we found objects like the two “hoes” clearly placed in the wall of pit structure B2, a structure considered in this discussion to have been domestic. Thus, it seems entirely possible that all structures, domestic or civic-ceremonial, included some sort of dedicatory offerings that have gone unrecognized as such, perhaps because wall remnants are rarely dismantled during excavations.

Another issue pertains to the destruction of these special structures. Creel and Anyon (2003) have noted, as had others previously, that most Mimbres great kivas had burned, and they asserted that the burning was deliberate. Together with the toppling of walls onto the fallen roof, this burning was considered to be the prescribed method of ritually retiring most of these special buildings. Our findings in Rooms A83 and B11 suggest that some kivas were similarly retired, particularly those dating to the Three Circle

phase; that is, certain objects were left on the floor, the room burned, and the walls then quickly pushed over onto the fallen roof. To be sure, at Old Town and other sites, some domestic pit structures were also burned upon abandonment, but others appear to have burned well after abandonment, and still others were simply allowed to deteriorate. Thus, whereas domestic buildings were variably destroyed or allowed to decay gradually, the large and small kivas in general seem to have been retired in a prescribed manner, at least until the Classic period.

It is perhaps also worth noting that all three of the coursed-adobe pit structures found so far at Old Town are clearly, or possibly, special buildings of some sort. Room A71 was a large communal pit structure, and Room B9 was also quite large, although not classified here as a large communal pit structure. Room B11 was a small kiva. All were burned, Room B11 perhaps most intensely so, and in each case, the walls lay directly on the fallen roof. The only other purportedly coursed-adobe pit structure of which I am aware is Room E at the Swarts ruin (Cosgrove and Cosgrove 1932), but it apparently was not a kiva.

Finally, analysis of kiva characteristics reveals interesting but poorly understood differences within the Mimbres area. For example, all known kivas at the Cameron Creek and nearby Treasure Hill sites have at least one, and usually more, subfloor burials, perhaps because some are converted pit houses (see Table 20). This is particularly true of Cameron Creek. In contrast, subfloor burials are rare in kivas elsewhere in the Mimbres area, regardless of age. Similarly, none of the Cameron Creek and Treasure Hill kivas is oriented to the north—that is, have their ventilator on that side—whereas north, northeast, and northwest orientations are fairly common in the Mimbres and Gila River valleys. The significance

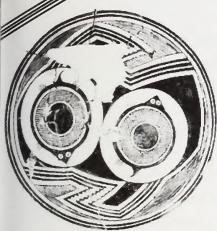
of such differences is unknown, but they underscore the idea that the Mimbres culture, as we define it archaeologically, embraces potentially important geographic variation.

Variation of a somewhat different kind relates to characteristics of Mimbres great kivas or large communal pit structures. Over the years, quite a number of these have been investigated, and there is considerable uniformity among them at any given time. However, as noted by Creel and Anyon (2003), certain ritually important features vary by area and by specific sites. Floor grooves or vaults, for example, are characteristic of Mogollon great kivas in general, regardless of time period, and they appear to be present in most great kivas in Mimbres sites in the Gila River drainage. In the Mimbres drainage, however, they are rare, having been found in great kivas only at Galaz and Old Town.

*Sipapus* are far less commonly encountered, and have so far been found in great kivas only at Galaz and Old Town. Similarly, subfloor burials in great kivas are known only from the same two sites, and at least some of the interments may contain decapitated individuals. That these infrequently encountered features have been found only at Old Town and Galaz in the Mimbres drainage surely reflects real differences between these two communities and other Mimbres villages. Creel and Anyon (2003) speculated that there may have been individuals living in these two large communities with responsibilities beyond their own villages, perhaps being responsible for very special rituals or ceremonies held only on rare occasions. It may be that these rituals related to the interments beneath the floors of the great kivas of Galaz and Old Town. In any event, beyond community size, a suite of ritually important features in the great kivas most clearly distinguishes Old Town and Galaz from other Mimbres communities.



## Classic and Terminal Classic Pueblo Architecture



Old Town has long been known for its extensive Classic period pueblo, and generations of pot-hunters have severely damaged it to the point that, today, the Classic architectural remains are difficult to assess even when one stands directly on them. This was not the case, however, when early archaeologists visited the site. Fewkes had perhaps the best opportunity to record architectural detail when he visited the site in 1913, but his extant records provide little useful information. Fortunately, Nels Nelson was more disposed to record more specific descriptive data, and his 1920 map of the site is the most useful (see Figure 11). We have been able to correlate his plan of the architecture with our contour map and, to a general extent, with our plan of the rooms in the northeast portion of Area A (what we have referred to as Terminal Classic pueblo rooms). Figure 118 presents our correlation with Nelson's map of Area A and his more detailed plan of the northern portion.

No other source of information has surfaced that reveals as much information on the plan of the Classic architecture as Nelson's map. It appears to depict a single large pueblo nearly 100 m north-south, much wider east-west on the north side. In this regard, Old Town differs from other large Mimbres communities, all of which have several room blocks. At Old Town, most of the masonry architecture is near the cliff edge on the western side of Area A. For those of us who have endured the relentless westerly winds, this plan and orientation seem eminently sensible, given that the pueblo would break the wind as well as provide for late afternoon shade.

Beyond the basic outline of this pueblo, Nelson's map provides relatively few other details. Among these are the areas he believed to be courtyards (one of which we apparently tested—our Feature A108) and a couple of rooms that E. D. Osborn presumably had dug not long before Nelson's visit. Given the apparent correlation of our findings to Nelson's

map, one could scale his map and calculate the area of Classic architecture. Not counting possible courtyard areas, there are, roughly speaking, some 4,000 m<sup>2</sup> of architecture represented on his map. Based on the average Classic room size of 16.1 m<sup>2</sup> from Blake et al. (1986), there would have been more than 200 rooms in this pueblo. However, despite the fact that there is presently no way to know how many rooms were in use at any particular time, it is clear that Old Town was a large community during the Classic period.

Beyond the information recorded by Nelson, there is practically no architecturally useful data from any digging at the site until our work began in 1989. About the only other bit of useful information comes from the notes of V. F. Tannich, who recorded one of the rooms he dug as measuring about 10 feet north-south, with a hearth. Tannich also noted that at least three secondary cremations were found as subfloor interments in a single Classic room in the north-central portion of the ruin; the secondary cremation he found is illustrated in Figure 12, top left. As noted elsewhere (Creel 2007), the presence of multiple cremation deposits in individual rooms is not unique to Old Town; indeed, there are notable cases at Galaz and Mattocks. Unfortunately, no other details are available on this room at Old Town.

One of the most interesting aspects of the 1989–2003 excavations at Old Town was our work in a masonry room block herein referred to as the Terminal Classic room block. The interest and excitement generated by our excavations was tempered, however, by the deplorable condition of the room block so damaged by at least a century of pothunting. Little did we know when work began that we would find unambiguous evidence for substantial construction by the Mimbres inhabitants *after* the introduction of pottery types such as Chupadero Black-on-white, El Paso Polychrome, and Playas Red Incised. Archaeologists had long believed that

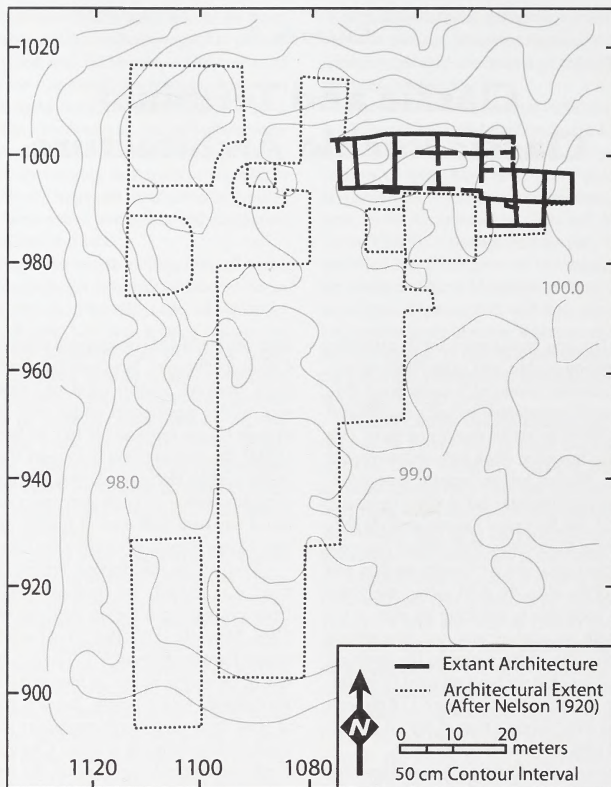


Figure 118. Classic architecture investigated during the 1989–2003 excavations provisionally matched to Nels Nelson's 1920 map.

the appearance of these and other ceramic types signaled a significant cultural change in the region, and, until very recently, the presence of these ceramic types was generally believed to mark the beginning of the Black Mountain phase, a period after the Mimbres culture had either declined substantially or disappeared altogether. Our findings at Old Town have been instrumental in clarifying this situation, although they contribute little to our knowledge of earlier Classic remains.

The masonry architecture described in this chapter lies in northern Area A, a portion of the site that

was heavily utilized over a fairly long period of time and was evidently actively occupied perhaps past A.D. 1150 but probably not as late as A.D. 1200. There are a number of pit structures in this area, although few of them were investigated to any extent, and there is a large amount of debris attributable to use of the area prior to A.D. 1000. In addition, we found a few remnants of what appear to be Classic remains, but these were poorly preserved as a result of later, Terminal Classic construction and, more recently, extensive pothunting. It is presumed that most of the Classic architecture in Area A lies to the south and

west of the Terminal Classic room block that is the primary subject of this chapter.

Not only have our excavations revealed the presence of a Mimbres room block built after the introduction of the non-Mimbres pottery types noted above, but, equally important, our work revealed that there were at least two major construction episodes in the building to this room block. Moreover, there is unambiguous evidence for extensive remodeling, even including the demolition of walls and whole rooms. Together, these facts indicate considerable passage of time during use of this room block by Old Town's Mimbres inhabitants, all during a time period supposedly postdating the Classic period as conventionally conceived. Thus, the significance of this architectural unit for understanding Mimbres cultural change cannot be overstated.

## The 1989–2003 Excavations

Most of our excavations in this room block (Figure 119), particularly later in the project, have focused on determining its plan (including room definition, assessing corner junction types, etc.). To do this, we basically reexcavated parts of the trenches dug by generations of pothunters along the walls. Only rarely did we encounter intact floor segments along walls, but they were in fact present in places. Similarly, this effort was important in that it permitted us to locate some doors and other wall openings, in addition to rooms and features whose presence was not otherwise indicated.

There was no overarching sampling plan, but several rooms were excavated completely, or as completely as possible given destruction by pothunting. These are A1, A2, A3, A6, A7, A57, A92, A110, A111, and A112. Essentially no floor was left by pothunters in Room A1, but significant portions of floor were present in the others. Smaller remnants of floor were encountered in wall trenching the other rooms, but these rarely had floor features. Of the one possible and two definite very large rooms in this room block, A11, A93, and A110, only the last was excavated other than along the walls, so we know nothing about floor features in the other two rooms and have only a possible indication of subfloor burials in A11.

Extramural excavations were quite limited and confined primarily to excavations along wall exteriors. These yielded important information on the north wall's unusual construction and the apparent presence

of a courtyard south of Rooms A11 and A110. In addition, these extramural excavations produced several adobe-mixing basins and other features.

## Room Block Plan and Construction

As described more fully later in this chapter, our excavations have determined that the Terminal Classic room block was built in two major construction stages (Figure 120), possibly with minor building and remodeling at other times. It is impossible to overstate the extent of damage from pothunting in this room block, most of it from hand digging, some by bulldozing, but all hindering architectural interpretation.

In the first construction stage, probably in the first few decades of the A.D. 1100s, rooms A1, A2, A6, A7, and A62 were built. These, we think, formed three suites: A1 (probably with an adjacent room on the west destroyed by bulldozing); A2/A62; and A6/A7/A9/A112. Because of extensive destruction of corners by pothunters, it is not possible to determine if these were built at the same or different times. We suspect, however, that the A2/A62 suite was added onto Room A7. Alignments of walls vary within this group of rooms, but, as a whole, they differ from the more regular alignment of Stage 2 walls. This group of rooms saw considerable remodeling and even partial demolition.

It is possible that the Stage 1 room group is larger than previously thought. Immediately beneath Room A110 are remnants of floors representing two earlier pueblo rooms (A123 and A124). The pair of superimposed floors in Room A123 could be traced to the footings for A110's east and south walls, but we have little information on Room A124. Based on stratigraphic position, Rooms A123 and A124 could be either Classic or Terminal Classic in age and presumably contemporaneous, at least in part, with Stage 1 rooms to the east. The very modest ceramic samples ( $n = 64$  and  $n = 24$ , for A123 and A124, respectively) from the small portions of excavated floor adobe lack any of the later, non-Mimbres types, suggesting that both A123 and A124 predate Stage 1 rooms. However, the low frequency of late-type sherds in Terminal Classic contexts does not preclude either Room A123 or A124 being contemporaneous with Stage 1 rooms. Because adjacent Room A11 has not been excavated except along walls where pothunters had already disturbed the deposits, we do not know if additional Stage 1 rooms



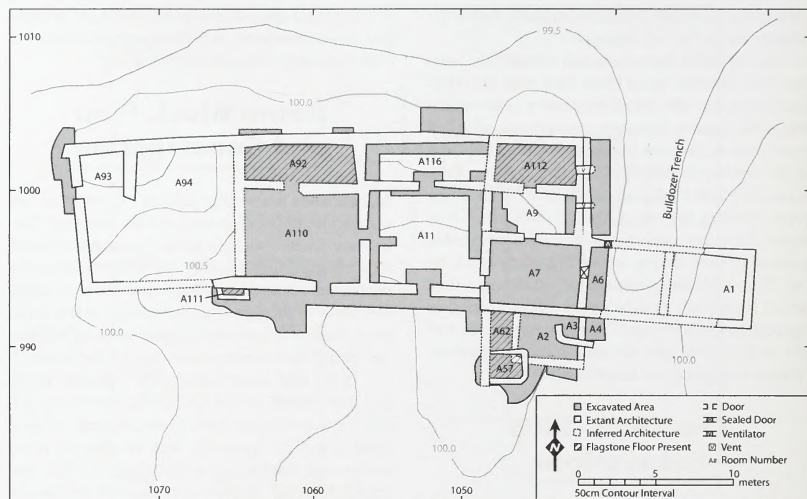


Figure 119. Classic period architecture investigated during 1989–2003 excavations.

were present there as well. If they were, the Stage 1 room block would have been significantly larger than previously thought.

Sometime later, but still in the mid–A.D. 1100s, the second major stage of construction occurred contiguous to the west and north sides of Stage 1 Room A7 (see Figure 120). As best we could determine, at least two mostly parallel, long, east-west walls were built from the northwest corner of Room A112 and the SW corner of Room A7. The south wall clearly abuts the west wall of Room A7 just south of the door, and it seems likely that the north wall abutted the northwest corner of Room A112. However, an intensive examination of this location revealed that pothunters had completely destroyed the junction, thus making it impossible to determine if this, too, was an abutment.

Between these two long walls were at least six, probably seven, and possibly eight rooms. The long north wall of this group of rooms can be traced almost continuously except for a few segments destroyed by pothunters. This wall, as well as some others in Stage 2, is unique at Old Town in that there is a considerable amount of thick blocky red rhyolite in the masonry, almost to the point of having individual courses of this stone. It also had an exterior veneer consisting of small rhyolite slabs set horizontally in

adobe. In addition, all of the corners not destroyed by pothunters in Stage 2 rooms were bonded, so the available evidence indicates a single construction event. Moreover, the probable presence of a bonded corner at the western end of the north wall suggests that the Stage 2 addition was in fact larger, but to what extent is unknown. At about 27 m east-west and a minimum of 8 m north-south, this was no small Mimbres room block, although it had relatively few rooms for its size. No substantive effort has yet been made to determine if the area Nels Nelson considered a courtyard south of our Stage 2 rooms was actually enclosed, but if it was, I presume it to have been part of Stage 2 construction as well.

We believe, but cannot be certain, that these Stage 2 rooms formed at least two suites (A11/A116 and A110/A92), each with a very large room connected to a small room. In both of the definite or probable suites, the smaller room is north of the larger room, and its floor is some 20 cm lower. The dimensions of the unexcavated space designated as Room A93 are very similar to the suites, so we presume that this is a comparable suite. On the other hand, it is also possible that Rooms A93 and A94 together constitute a suite like the other two, although one substantially larger and oriented perpendicular to them. Regardless, as a whole, Stage 2 is distinctive in its layout, room

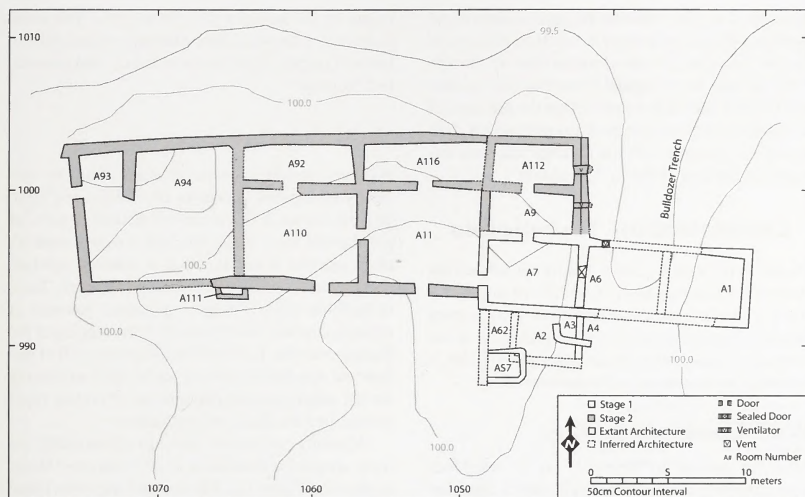


Figure 120. Major construction stages in Terminal Classic room block.

size, architectural details (especially veneers), single construction episode, and interconnectivity of “suites.”

Later construction over part of the Stage 1 room block area is very poorly preserved and imperfectly known because it would likely have been among the most obvious and accessible to the earliest pothunters. Nonetheless, enough critical corners and other architectural features were preserved that we can make some basic observations with some confidence. A complex series of features and rooms partially overlying Rooms A2 and A62 were possibly built after Stage 2, but they could also be contemporaneous with it. They are herein designated as Stage 3. Lumped together with them is Feature/Room A111, the tiny enclosed space with a flagstone floor added onto Room A110.

## Preparation of Site for Construction

Despite the modest extent of our excavations, it is possible to say a bit about preparation of the area for construction of the Terminal Classic room block. Only beneath Room A110 was there any evidence of earlier surface architecture, but there is a footing immediately south of tiny Feature/Room A111 that

is undated but presumed to be Classic. Apparently, much of the area had been used as a trash disposal area because there were substantial deposits here prior to construction, in some cases, 1 m or more of well-stratified trash. On the east side of the room block, we found unambiguous evidence that existing deposits of trash were partially removed to accommodate construction. This was most clear on the east sides of Rooms A1, A9, and A112, where one could see that relatively large volumes of midden had been removed from the areas where these rooms were to be built. The result was truncated deposits. In the case of Room A1, its east wall base was not built flush with the truncated deposits, so the narrow gap was filled with adobe probably from an adjacent basin used to mix adobe for A1’s wall construction. In Rooms A9 and A112, ventilators could be traced from the room floor through the wall and up to the exterior ground surface approximately 40 cm higher, again indicating that preexisting deposits were truncated to accommodate construction.

The extramural surface in what Nels Nelson considered to be a walled courtyard immediately south of the room block (our Feature A108) was slightly higher (12–14 cm) than the floors in adjacent rooms to the north. These floors, in turn, were about 20 cm higher (17–32 cm) than those in adjacent rooms to

the north. This likely reflects the general slope of the landform downward toward the north in this part of the site. However, the row of rooms from A2 through A112 all have lower original floors than rooms either east or west; this may simply reflect the presence of a slightly lower area here prior to construction. This would be consistent with our findings that trash was higher in the area of Room A1 and east.

## Construction Techniques

Chapter 4 presents a general description of the construction techniques used at Old Town during the many centuries that it was occupied; here, a more detailed description of the techniques used in the Terminal Classic room block is presented. This is followed by descriptions of individual rooms.

## Wall Construction

All of the walls in the Terminal Classic room block were masonry, although the style varied considerably from room to room. In many places, the wall remnants still stood about 1 m above the floor but elsewhere pothunting was so extensive that even presumed footings were destroyed. Regardless of style, the masonry was reasonably solid because it used the tuff available onsite. This tuff can be acquired in relatively flat pieces, is easily dressed, and would have formed masonry somewhat more durable and stronger than the rounded river stones so commonly used in the middle and upper Mimbres valley. Evidently, wall rocks were dressed according to wall thickness; the large numbers of basalt cobbles with battered edges presumably reflect the extent to which wall stones and other construction slabs were dressed. Many of the rocks used in these walls were quite large and weigh well over 100 pounds, requiring two or three people to move them.

As noted previously, most of the masonry walls found in Stage 1 rooms are approximately 50 cm thick, with the stones set in copious quantities of adobe mortar; some walls, however, are significantly thinner. In general, masonry here was built with tuff rocks set horizontally in adobe. Somewhat different were the walls of Room A1, which were built of tuff slabs set horizontally, but between large tuff slabs placed vertically and perpendicular to the wall axis every 80 cm (see Figure 49). In some parts of the wall, smaller slabs were set vertically between the larger ones. The whole was quite different from any other wall that has been exposed in our excavations

except for the thinner walls of Room A57. This small room with a flagstone floor also had vertical slabs in the wall perpendicular to the wall axis, and its walls had footings.

## Wall Footings

Footings typically consisted of slabs of tuff set vertically in copious quantities of adobe (see Figure 48), but, occasionally, worn-out metates or slabs of red rhyolite were employed. These stones were set close together in adobe, often in trenches substantially wider than the wall that they supported. Thus, in building these footings, significant volumes of existing deposits were removed in the digging of the footing trenches. It is possible that some or all of this material was used in making adobe, thus accounting for the rather considerable mixture of pottery types present in wall, floor, and roof adobe.

Masonry walls with footings of vertically set rocks are present throughout much of the room block, as shown in Figure 121. For example, they were found along the length of the north and south walls, at least so far as these have been exposed; footings also are present beneath the north-south wall between Rooms A11 and A116, on the one hand, and Rooms A110 and A92 on the other, and beneath the east wall of Room A11. Owing to lack of excavation and/or pothunter destruction, we do not know if other walls to the west of A110 had footings, although it seems probable that they did. The massive north-south wall on the west side of Room A94 has been only minimally exposed, but the very large stones in this wall lead one to predict the presence of a footing. If true, it seems likely that all of the original north-south walls as well as the northern and southern east-west walls had footings.

The most confusing exceptions are walls in Rooms A2 and A7. Clearly, the east wall of Room A2 did not have a footing (see Figure 121). In contrast, as discussed in detail later, the A6/A7 wall probably did have a footing even though it was on the same alignment as adjacent A2's east wall. We cannot be sure of Room A7's south wall because of the effects of pothunter disturbance, but there was no good evidence of a footing under this wall or under the A7/A9 wall (although this wasn't adequately addressed during the excavations). However, the north wall in Room A9 did have a footing.

None of the preserved walls of Rooms A1, A2, A4, or A6 (other than the previously mentioned A6/A7 wall) have footings. Surprisingly, the rather massive walls of Room A1 were built on top of existing



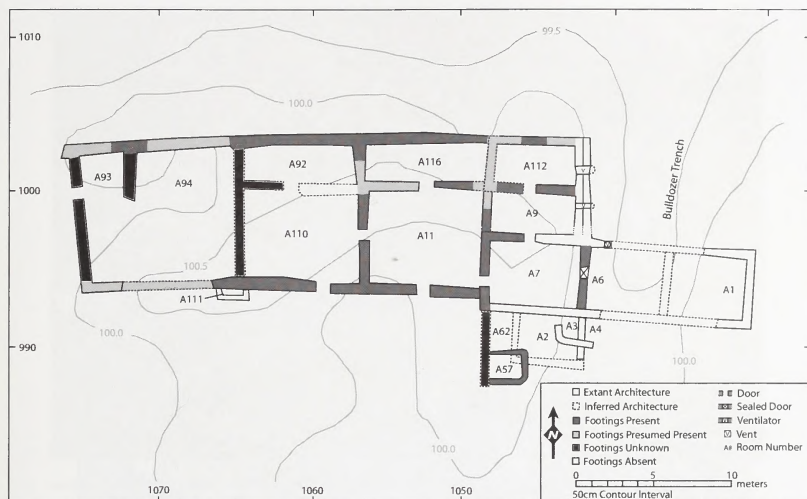


Figure 121. Occurrence of wall footings in Terminal Classic room block.

trash deposits in and above a pit house, yet no footings were used. Indeed, all of the walls so far exposed in this room block were built on a good measure of trash that was deepest over pit houses. We are thus forced to conclude that the presence of underlying loose trash was not enough to require footings.

One possible interpretation of these differences is that footings were used for walls that supported either very high walls or second-story construction. The former seems less likely because one would expect walls of comparable height throughout a room block built in one construction episode, especially in rooms connected by doors. If the presence of footings is indicative of higher walls, then adjacent and interconnected Rooms A7 and A6, for example, would have had walls and roofs of a different height, which seems improbable.

Therefore, it seems more likely that thick walls with footings supported second-story construction, a possibility that, unfortunately, cannot be adequately evaluated with the evidence in hand. There was, however, possible evidence in the form of a second layer of roof fall in Rooms A7 and A112, and the wall fall in Room A7 suggests a second story. In addition, as discussed below, the east wall of Rooms A9 and A112 was thickened (see Figure 121), perhaps to

strengthen the wall against the weight of a second story. Ultimately, however, we cannot be sure how to interpret the presence or absence of footings.

## Wall Finishing: Plaster and Veneer

Except as noted below, the walls in this room block were finished with adobe plaster, which was usually continuous with the floor adobe inside rooms. Typically, little of this survived the pothunting which tended to occur right along walls, but a few wall segments still retained their plaster coating. Based on this evidence, it seems clear that none of the masonry was exposed, at least inside rooms, although it is entirely likely that adobe mortar and plaster exposed to the elements on exterior walls gradually eroded away, partially exposing wall rocks.

One of the least expected findings at Old Town was the presence of a true veneer on the exterior of the north wall (Figure 122) and on at least one of the interior walls of Room A92 (Figure 123). To my knowledge, no other Mimbres site is known to have a true masonry veneer (although a partial veneer was apparently found by Morris at the site he referred to as Swarts 2, across the Mimbres River from the well-

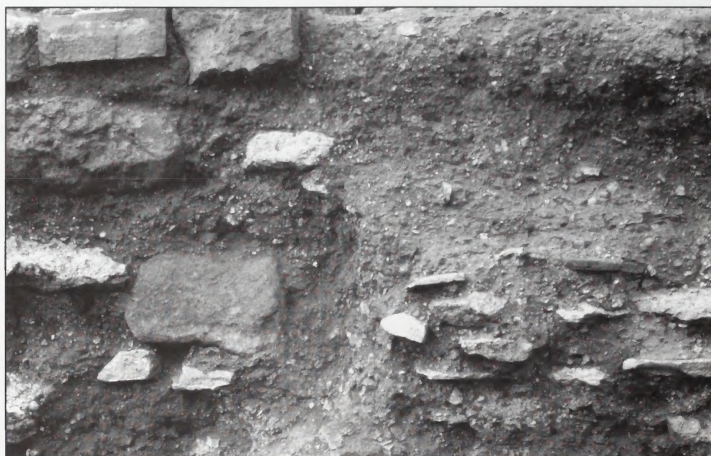


Figure 122. Remnant of veneer on north wall exterior of Room A116. Note that veneer has been removed by looters and/or erosion on left.



Figure 123. Remnant of interior veneer on south wall of Room A92.



Figure 124. Photograph of doorway between Rooms A7 and A11 with possible veneer on south wall of Room A11.

known Swarts Ruin [Carlson 1965:7]), yet we found remnants in two or three locations. The veneer on the exterior of the north wall consisted of small, thin rhyolite slabs set horizontally in adobe, the veneer itself being some 15 cm or so thick. This was applied to the thick, load-bearing masonry interior, creating an even thicker wall. Needless to say, this veneer was not very well preserved, but we encountered it in every exposure of the north wall's exterior.

The veneer on the south wall of Room A92 was much better preserved, although only a very short segment of the wall itself was intact (see Figure 123). In technique, it was the same as the exterior veneer, but this interior veneer was finer, if perhaps not quite so thick. It was preserved over all of the nearly 1-m-high wall remnant. The presence of large numbers of small rhyolite slabs underneath intact wall fall from the north and west walls suggests that they, too, had a veneer; if so, it is probable that the east wall was comparable. In other rooms, these small slabs were

quite common, so we are inclined to think that some other rooms or walls also had veneers. On the other hand, some reasonably well-preserved walls in this room block clearly did not have veneers. We cannot explain the differential presence of wall veneer.

Although there was no description of the south wall in the southeast corner of Room A11 when it was exposed in the 1992 excavations, photographs suggest that it, too, had a veneer like that in Room A92 (Figure 124). However, none of the other walls in this room had a veneer, and sections of both the east and north walls were well enough preserved that the wall plaster was still present.

### Slabs along Wall Bases

A number of rooms in this room block had dressed slabs of Sugarlump rhyolite set vertically along the wall bases. These slabs were as large as 50 by 100 cm but were usually somewhat smaller. Typically,



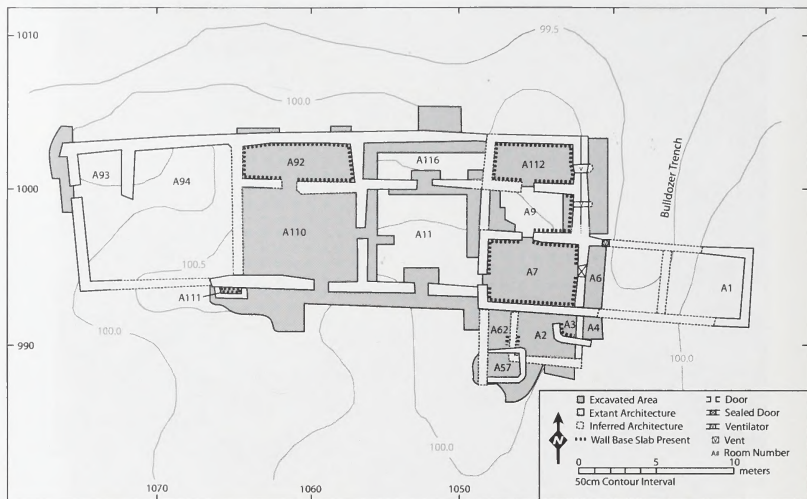


Figure 125. Walls with vertical slabs along base.

they were set lengthwise, close together end to end. In all cases, they were partially below floor level, indicating that they were part of the original room construction. In only one case, Room A7, were there additional slabs above the lower ones, and only one higher course was present (how much higher, if at all, is unknown owing to poor preservation). We believe that these slabs were exposed and not covered with plaster. Walls so constructed are present in Rooms A3, A7, A9, A57, A92, A111, A112, and probably A2 and A62, mostly in the eastern portion of the room block (Figure 125). It is possible that other rooms had such slabs that were removed completely by pothunting, which, as noted previously, was concentrated along room walls.

It is important to note that only three of these rooms with slabs along the wall bases also had a flagstone floor, although mostly unexcavated Room A9 may also have had one (no undisturbed portion has been excavated). Regardless, it is clear that flagstone floors and slabs along the wall base do not necessarily occur together at Old Town. Mimbres archaeologists have traditionally considered the combination of these architectural attributes to reflect granary rooms, but there is little to support this in our data. Of the three rooms having both characteristics (Rooms A92, A111, and A112), Room A112 also had a floor-level ventila-

tor opening to the exterior ground surface. Adjacent Room A9 may have had the same combination of features. Thus, these vertical slabs may have had multiple functions.

## Doors, Vents, and Ventilators

Several doors were found in the Terminal Classic room block. Two, and possibly three, were evidently ground-level exterior doors. Two in Stage 2 rooms opened onto a probable courtyard area on the south side. The majority, however, connect two rooms to one another and are about 50 cm wide. As noted in an earlier chapter, most of the doors have slightly raised thresholds (20 cm higher than adjacent floor). In some cases, one or more rhyolite slabs serve as the sill (see Figure 53). In some doorways, the edges were also framed with vertical rhyolite slabs. The door between Rooms A6 and A7 had been sealed with vertical slabs and adobe, and there is also evidence of a sealed door in the north wall of Room A57. In addition, there is plausible evidence of a sealed door in a second-story room above A7 (see its description below).

The opening between Rooms A7 and A9, evidently a door originally, had been modified into a vent (63 cm high, 48 cm wide) (Figure 126). This is the only interior vent identified during our excavations.



Figure 126. Vent in north wall of Room A7.

An apparent exterior vent was present in the north wall of Room A6, but it is poorly preserved because of pothunting.

In addition, there are two ventilators in Terminal Classic rooms, both of which had been sealed. These interesting features were in adjacent rooms A9 and A112, each in the east wall (Figure 127; see Figure 119). At the time these rooms were constructed, the exterior surface was about 40 cm higher than the room floors, so it was evidently necessary to dig and line vertical shafts from the actual wall vent to the outside ground surface. The vents themselves were framed with rhyolite slabs. The only one of these rooms excavated to any extent is A112. It is a long, narrow room with a flagstone floor and large rhyolite slabs set vertically at the wall bases. No hearth was present anywhere in the preserved portion of A112, and it is not clear why this room (or A9) has such a ventilator.

## Floors

Floors, consisting of smoothed adobe some 2–5 cm thick, are basically level. In most cases where the floor-wall junction is undisturbed, the floor adobe is continuous with the wall plaster, at least in the initial construction. For the most part, floor adobe seemed to have fewer inclusions than adobe used in walls and roofs, but there certainly are some sherds, lithics, animal bones, gravel, charcoal, and other materials in floor adobe. The floor adobe in the southwest corner of Room A3 has a decidedly different appearance in that it contains a profusion of small white inclusions that looks like pulverized tuff bedrock. Given the burial of a macaw in the wall at the base of the door into this room, we speculated that this whitish floor may have resulted from macaw fecal material,

implying that a macaw was kept in this small, narrow room; there is, however, no evidence to support this speculation.

A few rooms in the Terminal Classic room block had flagstone floors consisting of thin slabs of white Sugarlump rhyolite set in adobe (Rooms A57, A62, A92, A111, and A112) (Figures 128 and 129). The flagstones lay over as much as 6 cm of adobe and underlie as much as 2 cm. Two of these rooms, A62 and A112, were part of Stage 1 construction. A third room, A57, was built over the remnants of Room A2 walls and thus is considered part of Stage 3, probably late in the Terminal Classic component. Similarly, tiny Room A111 was added to the south side of Room A110 and the adjacent room to its west (see Figure 128). In Room A92, there are two layers of rhyolite slabs set in adobe and separated by 3 cm of fill. This is the only room known to have had more than one flagstone flooring.

As noted in an earlier chapter, in Room A112, the flagstone floor consists of closely placed rhyolite slabs of varying sizes with very small pieces set vertically in spaces where the flagstones could not be laid in contact with one another. It is complemented by the large rhyolite slabs set vertically along the wall bases as described above, but, it is important to note that none of the other rooms with flagstone floors has such slabs along the wall bases.

Several rooms in this room block had been remodeled, and two or more floors were encountered in a number of rooms. This was true of both the Terminal Classic rooms in the northern part of Area A and in the Black Mountain phase rooms in Area C. Perhaps the most interesting instance of multiple floors is in Room A2, a Terminal Classic room. In addition to its original floor, this room had been remodeled four times, resulting in a series of five floors. This evidence



Figure 127. Ventilator in east wall of Room A112.

for repeated remodeling supports the argument that the Terminal Classic occupation at Old Town was both fairly substantial and lengthy.

## Roofs

The basic description of roof construction presented in Chapter 4 needs little elaboration, but a few additional details are pertinent here. In particular, it is worth noting that greater numbers of fir and Ponderosa pine timbers were used in this room block than elsewhere at Old Town, with the exception of the great kiva, Room A16. In part, the key may be larger room size and the need for longer beams (see below for another possible factor), although specimens of both fir and Ponderosa pine were present in even the smallest Terminal Classic rooms from which we have samples (e.g., A2 and A112). It is interesting to note that these rooms and Room A7 had postholes, presumably for roof supports. If so, they would have minimized the need for long beams. Similarly, large Room A110 had one definite roof-support post and likely had another (probable location disturbed); we therefore infer that Room A11 and, presumably, A93

also had roof-support posts, again minimizing the need for longer beams.

It is also possible that some of the recovered timber fragments were from roof-support posts; certainly larger Room A16, the rectangular great kiva built ca. A.D. 874–875, had Douglas fir posts supporting a roof at least 3 m high. Thus, the use of fir may relate as much or more to ceiling height as to horizontal dimensions.

## Notched Slabs

As was discussed briefly in Chapter 4, a number of notched slabs like those supporting raised floors in Hohokam structures have been found at Old Town. A few have been found in disturbed fill during our excavations, none clearly in place. Along the north wall of Room A110, we found a very large notched slab (Figure 130) in disturbed fill but also located a long, narrow hole that we suspect may have been where the slab was set. If so, it would have been perpendicular to the north wall and about 50 cm from it. No other notched slabs were found along this wall, but virtually all of this area had been heavily pothunted. However,



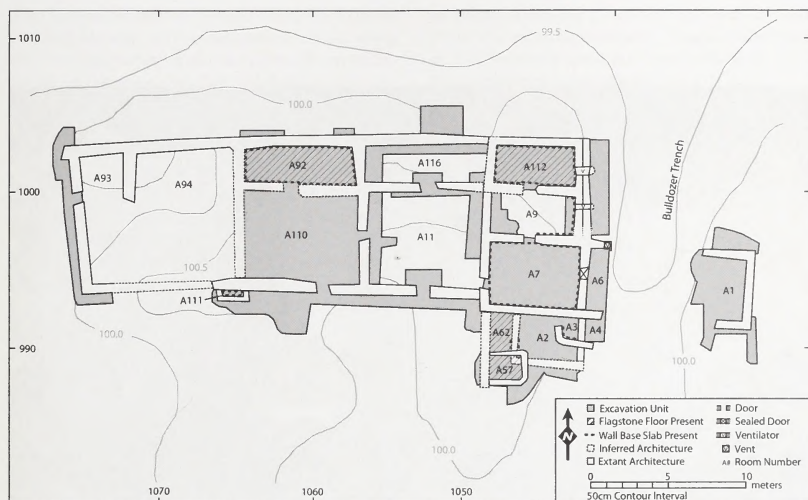


Figure 128. Rooms with flagstone floors in Terminal Classic room block.



Figure 129. Room A112, view south at remnants of flagstone floor and vertically set slabs along wall bases.

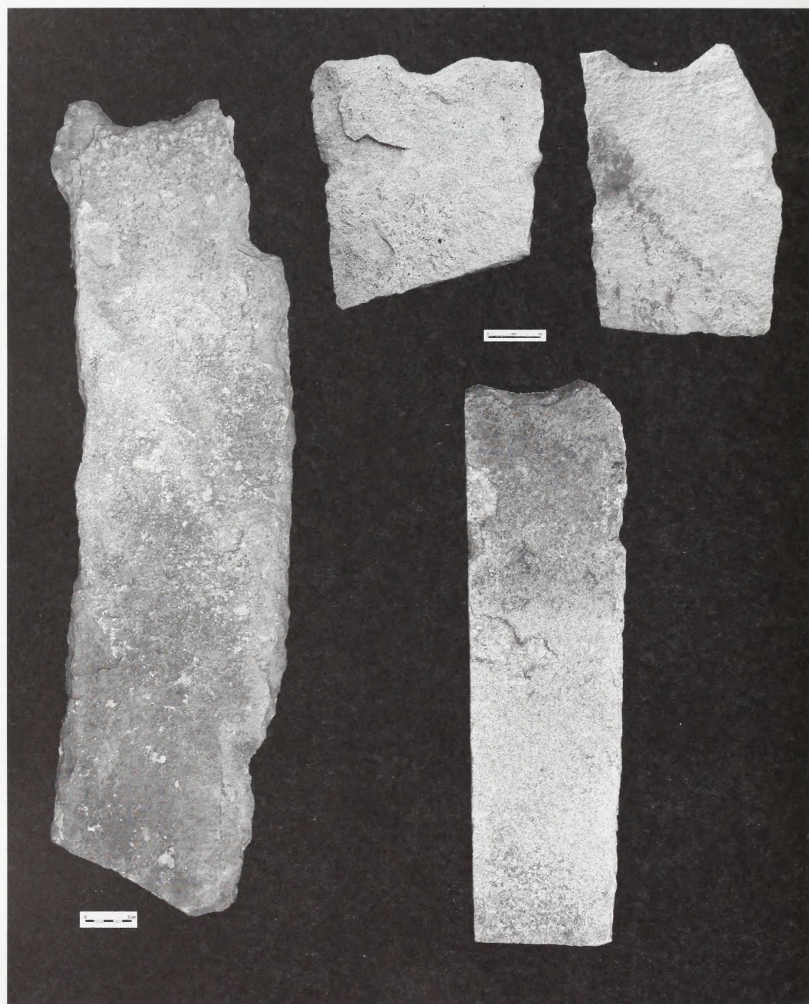


Figure 130. Notched slabs from 1989–2003 excavations in Terminal Classic room block.

I am inclined to believe that additional slabs and/or forked posts were set in comparable locations along this wall, supporting horizontal poles. Based on the length of the recovered slab and depth to the possible seating hole, we project that the top of the slab would have been some 30 cm or so above the first floor. Perhaps these slabs supported benches along the wall.

In 1920, when Nels Nelson visited Old Town with E. D. Osborn, he photographed a partially excavated room with masonry walls (see Figure 54). In the backdirt from the wall trenching (perhaps Osborn's), several of the large notched slabs were evidently stuck in the backdirt for photographic purposes (some of these are illustrated by Cosgrove and Cosgrove [1932:Plate 54]). There are also several metates and other slabs, all presumably from along one or more of the walls of this one room. Thus, these notched slabs evidently came from a location within the room that would be consistent with their use to support benches. One could also speculate that more were present in the unexcavated portion of that room.

Unfortunately, the photograph does not include any details that would allow one to determine where at the site this room was located. Although Nelson made a measured sketch of the walls, only one of which was fully exposed, this room is not specifically identified on either of his two maps of Area A. However, on these maps, he specifically plotted three rooms for which he could get dimensions (see Figure 118); one would assume that these had been dug fairly recently. None of these has dimensions exactly matching the partially excavated room he photographed and sketched, although two are quite close with regard to one dimension.

One of these rooms would be west or southwest of the area we have excavated; the other is apparently our Room A112. Given our finding of two notched slabs in disturbed fill in A112, it is entirely possible that this is the room Nelson photographed. If so, there would have been a substantial number of notched slabs from this room. This issue is discussed more fully in the description of Room A112 below.

## Room A1

**Dimensions:** ca. 4 m north-south; east-west dimension unknown but estimated at 4–5 m

**Floor area:** Estimated at a minimum of 16–20 m<sup>2</sup>

**Portion excavated:** Eastern portion

**Walls:** Masonry (see Figure 49). All of the west wall was destroyed by bulldozing, which also destroyed

all but approximately 1 m of both the north and south walls. The east wall is intact to a height of about one m. The preserved northeast corner is bonded.

**Wall openings:** None in surviving east wall

**Access:** Unknown but speculated to have been via ceiling hatch

**Floor:** Only one floor identified, but only very tiny fragments preserved along east wall

**Hearth:** None preserved

**Other floor features:** None preserved

**Burials:** None preserved, but human skeletal remains indicate that a minimum of seven individuals may have been interred beneath the floor (MNI = 7, but some of these could predate Room A1).

**Destruction and abandonment:** No data, owing to complete destruction of floor.

**Dating:** No dates

## Room A2

**Dimensions:** ca. 3.3 m north-south; east-west dimension approximately 4 m

**Floor area:** ca. 13.2 m<sup>2</sup>

**Portion excavated:** Probably nearly all

**Walls:** Masonry. Virtually all of the north wall was destroyed by pothunting, and the south wall has yet to be excavated (if any remains other than in the southwest corner). The west wall was at least partially destroyed prehistorically during major renovation, and most of the remnant appears to have been destroyed by pothunters. In the east wall, only the lowest course remained after modification of Rooms A2 and A4 for construction of Room A3.

**Wall openings:** No data, but we speculate that there may have been a door in the west wall leading into Room A62 (based on location of hearth and apparent ladder in A2).

**Access:** Presumably via ceiling hatch, at least originally

**Floor:** Original and four additional floors, one directly on top of the one below

**Hearths:** Uppermost floor: oval, 30 by 40 by 4 cm, adobe lined; partially sectioned during construction of Room A3 (Figure 131). Second floor (counting bottom as floor 1): partially disturbed by pothunting; oval, estimated at 40 by 55 cm, 12 cm deep, adobe lined. First floor: 60 by 50 cm, 13 cm deep, adobe lined. All contained ash and charcoal. Hearth on first floor sampled for archaeomagnetic dating, without success.

**Other floor features:** Postholes, possible ladder post hole, and pit of unknown function



**Burials:** None even partially intact, but human skeletal remains suggest that at least 10 individuals may be represented by the elements from disturbed fill in this and Room A3.

**Destruction and abandonment:** At least the northern portion of the east wall was removed down to the lowest course to accommodate the construction of Room A3, whose south wall extended over the lowest course of the A2/A4 wall. As a result of the bulldozing, it is impossible to know how far east Room A3 extended, but it would have been a narrow room if the original north wall of A2 was still in use. Possibly concurrent with construction of Room A3, but maybe later, the west and south walls of Room A2 were demolished to upper floor level. Thereafter, at least five basins, some apparently hearths, others adobe-mixing basins, were built in succession (A122, then A121, A60-3, A60-2, and finally A60-1). Each had an associated adobe-paved surface, but none could be tied to any room walls owing primarily to the fact that the surrounding area had been extensively disturbed by pothunters. Above and postdating these features is Room A57. A juvenile turkey was interred in the corner of Room A2.

**Dating:** No dates; attempts to collect archaeomagnetic samples from hearths were unsuccessful.

## Room A3

**Dimensions:** ca. 1 m north-south; east-west dimension unknown but at least 2–3 m.

**Floor area:** Estimated at a minimum of 2–3 m<sup>2</sup>

**Portion excavated:** Western portion

**Walls:** Masonry of horizontally set tuff slabs (Figure 132). Virtually all of the north wall was destroyed by pothunting, assuming that the north wall of A3 was the original north wall of Room A2. The west wall is intact to a height of ca. 75 cm and has a door on the north end (no preserved threshold other than adobe). The southwest corner is bonded, and the south wall extends east to the bulldozer trench over the lowest course of the A2/A4 wall. Slabs of Sugarlump rhyolite were set vertically along the wall bases, extending below floor level (Figure 133). A breeding-age scarlet macaw was buried in a small cavity in the wall at the edge of the door (Figure 134); eggshell indicates that it was a female (see Creel and McKusick 1994).

**Wall openings:** Door in west wall

**Access:** Door in west wall

**Floor:** Two floors, the upper with abundant white inclusions in adobe (see Figure 133). The only preserved section of floor is a small area in the corner.

One steps down 17 cm from Room A2 into this room.

**Hearth:** None

**Other floor features:** None other than a large sherd from a Mimbres Corrugated jar (see Figure 133)

**Burials:** None believed to relate to this room. A substantial number of skeletal elements were recovered from disturbed fill attributable to Rooms A2 and A3, but these are considered to be most likely related to A2.

**Destruction and abandonment:** No date

**Dating:** No dates

## Room A4

It is not certain that the space designated as Room A4 was actually enclosed and roofed. No remnant of floor indicating that this was a room was found in our excavations, but Room A3 extended east beyond the demolished east wall of Room A2 into what was designated as A4. If the room was present, all of its north, east, and south walls were destroyed by pothunting, particularly by bulldozing.

## Room A6

**Dimensions:** 4 m north-south; east-west dimension cannot be determined owing to bulldozing of east side.

**Floor area:** Estimated at a minimum of 8–10 m<sup>2</sup> based on the assumption that vent in north wall was centrally placed.

**Portion excavated:** Entire remnant west of bulldozer trench

**Walls:** Masonry. The lower portion of the west wall has vertically set stones with horizontally set stones above. The only other preserved wall section is a tiny segment of the north wall where a floor-level vent is present (exterior surface was evidently approximately the same elevation). This vent is framed on the sides by tuff slabs and is ca. 15 cm wide.

**Wall openings:** The door in the west wall was sealed with masonry

**Access:** Via door from Room A7

**Floor:** Adobe, two layers, one directly on top of the other

**Hearth:** None present in preserved floor

**Other floor features:** Small ash deposit on lower floor; posthole in same location on both floors

**Burials:** None even partially intact, but human skeletal remains represent a minimum of five individuals.



Figure 131. Remnant of hearth on uppermost floor of Room A2; other portion removed during construction of Room A3.



Figure 132. Detail of masonry in south wall remnant of Room A3.



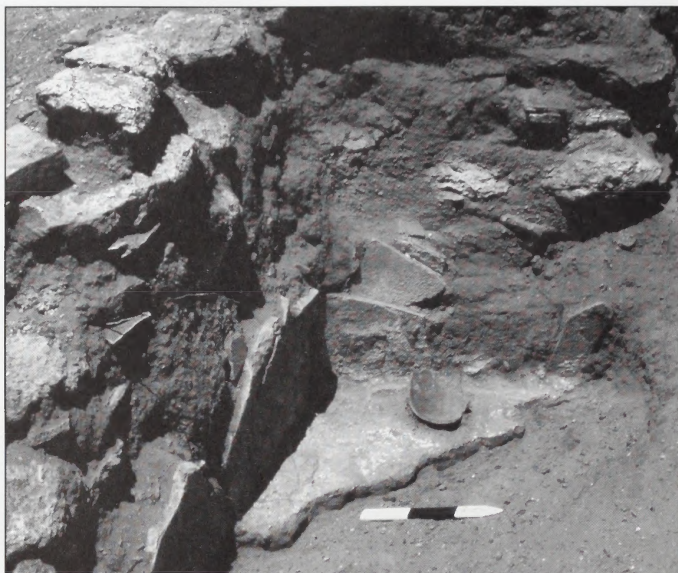


Figure 133. Floor remnant with fragment of corrugated jar in southwest corner of Room A3.



Figure 134. Cranial bones of breeding-age female scarlet macaw buried in the base of the doorway in the west wall of Room A3.



**Destruction and abandonment:** No useful data

**Dating:** No dates

## Room A7

**Dimensions:** 4 by 6 m (east wall 3.8 m long)

**Floor area:** 24 m<sup>2</sup>

**Portion excavated:** All (Figure 135)

**Walls:** Horizontally placed tuff masonry, with footing of vertically set tuff slabs under west wall (Figure 136; see Figure 48). The lower portion of the east wall also has vertically set stones with horizontally set stones above. Unlike the west wall, the bases of the vertically set stones in the east wall are only partially (as much as 15 cm) below the original floor (and as much as 40 cm below the floor of A6) and probably represent a footing. It should be noted here that the floor of Room A7 is about 20 cm deeper than either of the rooms east and west (A6 and A11, respectively), so one stepped down into Room A7 from these rooms. However, the floors of Room A9 to the north and A2 to the south are about the same elevation as in Room A7. Thus, there is no step down from A9 to A7, although there is an original door threshold 6–8 cm higher than adjacent floors. Because pothunters destroyed most of the south wall, it is unknown if there was a doorway into Room A2. There is a large round stone mortar at the base of the northeast corner. The south, east, and north walls have vertical slabs along the wall base (variably preserved), and it is presumed that the west wall did as well.

**Wall openings:** The door in the east wall was sealed with masonry (vertically set tuff slabs), but the door in the west wall is open (see Figures 48 and 136), assuming that pothunters had not removed the sealing material. The well-preserved opening in the north wall was probably a door originally, given its dimensions of 64 cm high by 45 cm wide; two Sugarlump rhyolite slab lintels are still in place (see Figures 126 and 136). This door was converted to a vent about 38 cm<sup>2</sup>, using the same threshold or sill. The side grooves for holding a closing slab are distinct. It is possible that this conversion from door to vent coincided with the sealing of the ventilator in adjacent Room A9 and/or with the sealing of the door into Room A6.

**Access:** Presumably via exterior door in west wall. In addition, there may have been a ladder going to the roof or, if actually present, a second-story room. There is a small posthole just north of the hearth, and this posthole has a large rock immediately adjacent, much like ladder-pole holes in pit structures else-

where at the site. There could have been a second posthole like this one, but if so, it would have been to the east where the floor was removed by pothunters. Thus, it is impossible to ascertain if there was a ladder, but it seems probable. This posthole originates from the upper floor and therefore relates to the latest use of the room; whether there was a ladder on the original floor is unknown.

**Floor:** Adobe, two layers, each 7–8 cm thick, one directly on top of the other. Burned grass matting was on the floor in the eastern portion of the room. As noted above, the original floor is lower than floors in adjacent, connected rooms east and west, but approximately the same as in adjacent rooms north and south (A9 to the north definitely connected; unknown if A2 connected).

**Hearth:** Oval; 65 by ca. 95 cm, 22 cm deep; adobe, with flat pebbles embedded in the adobe around the rim. Partially destroyed by pothunters. Contained large quantity of ash, with some charcoal. Unclear if the same hearth was used for both floors, but it is possible that the pebbles around the rim may have been added to the existing hearth when the room was refloored.

**Other floor features:** Postholes, ash deposits, and miscellaneous pits (Figure 137). There are three small holes in the lower floor near the south wall, each 3–4 cm in diameter and depth.

**Burials:** Portions of six graves with at least some skeletal elements articulated were preserved, but all had been disturbed by pothunting (Figure 138). Human skeletal remains in disturbed fill represent an additional 16 individuals.

**Destruction and abandonment:** Burned; roof fell on floor, then walls fell onto roof.

**Dating:** A large number of charred timber fragments, most of them fairly small, were submitted for tree-ring dating, but only two, both from disturbed fill, yielded dates. Specimen MIM-758 yielded a date of A.D. 1107+/-v and specimen MIM-760, a date of A.D. 1074+vv (see Table 4). No archaeomagnetic samples could be collected from the hearth, but six cubes were collected from the small amount of burned wall plaster still present on the west wall. These did not yield a date, although the  $\alpha_{95}$  is very near A.D. 1125–1150 on the Southwest Master Curve.

**Possible second-story room:** One section of fallen wall consists of four large dressed slabs of Sugarlump rhyolite ca. 70 cm long, still in intact adobe (Figure 139). As did others, this wall segment clearly fell from the central portion of the north wall (another was in a comparable position), and the lowest of the

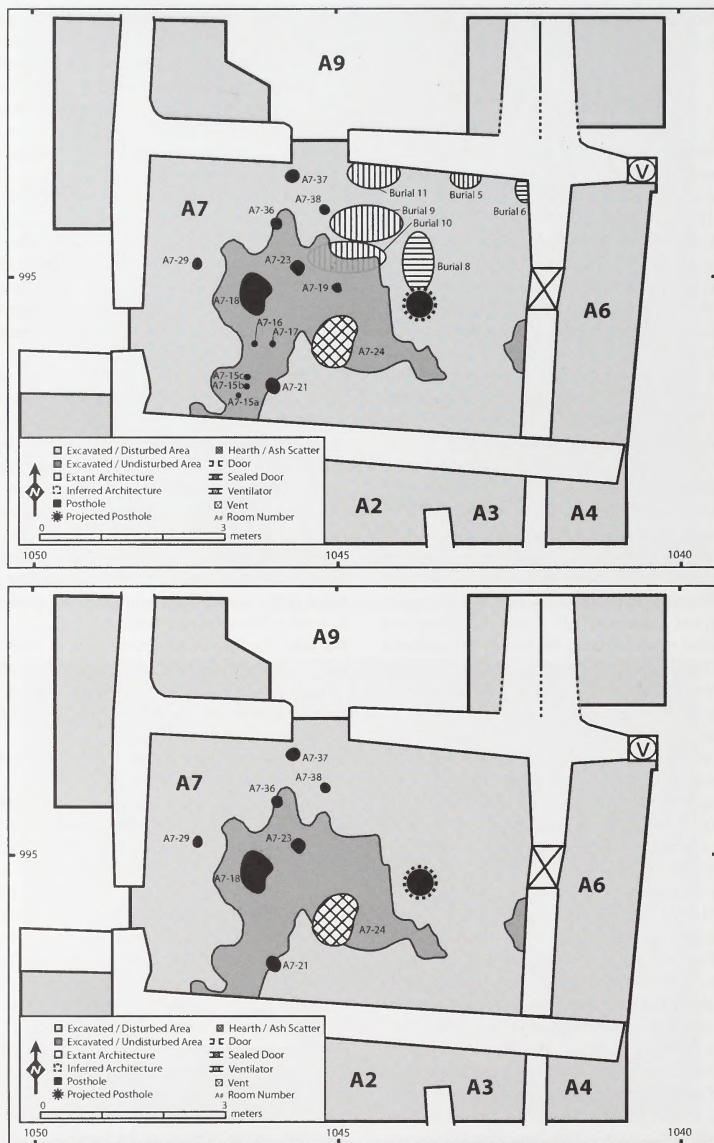
Figure 135. Plan of features on upper (*top*) and lower (*bottom*) floor remnants of Room A7.



Figure 136. Remnants of the west and north walls of Room A7, with earlier pit house (A12) and large storage pit in bedrock below (meter scale with arrow pointing north).



Figure 137. Remnant of lower floor in western portion of Room A7: features excavated (meter scale; arrow points north).





Figure 138. Disturbed interments below the floor of Room A7.

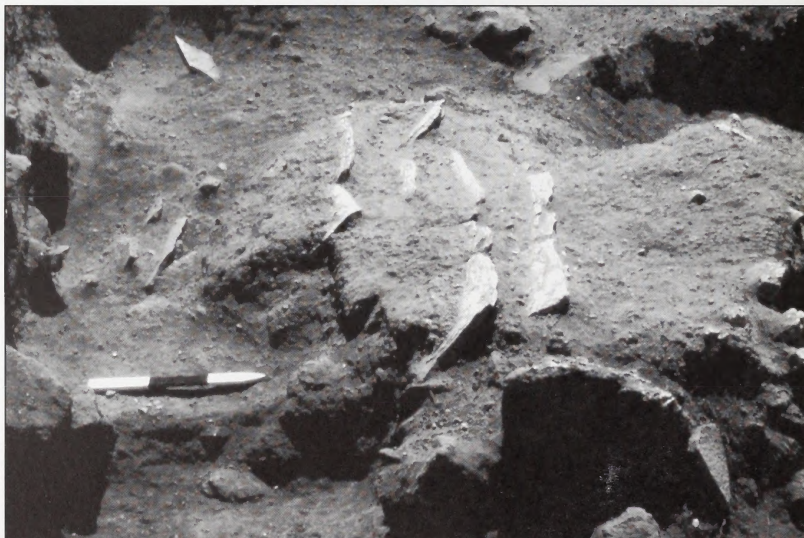


Figure 139. Intact section of fallen wall in Room A7. This section of wall composed of dressed slabs of Sugarlump rhyolite set in adobe (30-cm arrow points north).

slabs would have been approximately 3.4 m above the upper floor level (based on distance from the top of the standing north wall remnant). The highest would have been about 3.6 m above the floor. This suggests that there was a second-story wall above A7 that had a door. The presence of two layers of burned roof in Room A7, the lower directly on the floor, the upper on top of the lower, with wall fall immediately above, also suggests that there was a second-story room above A7 with a door in its north wall.

## Room A9

**Dimensions:** 2.75 m north-south; 5.5 m east-west

**Floor area:** 15.10 m<sup>2</sup>

**Portion excavated:** West, east, and part of south walls trenched

**Walls:** Masonry. The east wall is intact to a height of about 1 m and is continuous north in Room A112. The northeast corner is bonded, as is probably the southeast. East wall thickness increased to 90 cm with added reinforcement of vertical stones in adobe on exterior.

**Wall openings:** Sealed ventilator in east wall; ventilator extended eastward with new slab framing as the thickness of the wall was increased. Probable door in north wall, disturbed by pothunting (width ca. 1 cm; threshold 27 cm above A9 floor). The well-preserved door in south wall (64 cm high by 45 cm wide; two Sugarlump rhyolite slab lintels are still in place) was converted to a vent about 38 cm<sup>2</sup> using the same threshold or sill. As noted in the Room A7 description, it is possible this door was converted to a vent when the ventilator in the east wall was sealed. A small, plain ware pinchpot was found within masonry of east wall (Figure 140), presumably placed at time of construction.

**Access:** Via door in A7/A9 wall

**Floor:** No substantial area of floor was preserved in wall trenches, but there were many slabs in the disturbed fill that probably either lined the wall bases or were from a flagstone floor.

**Hearth:** No data

**Other floor features:** No data

**Burials:** A small number of bones represents at least four individuals, but it is not clear that they were subfloor burials related to this room.

**Destruction and abandonment:** Burned timbers in disturbed fill presumably indicate that this room burned; this is consistent with burned sacaton-grass thatch in vent in south wall and with slightly burned wall plaster on west wall. However, some of the charred



Figure 140. Plain ware vessel from east wall of Room A9.

timber fragments may have derived from disturbance of an underlying pit structure; this is suggested by the tree-ring dates on two timbers (see below).

**Dates:** Two charred Douglas fir timber fragments from disturbed fill along the east wall yielded noncutting tree-ring dates (see Table 4): A.D. 928vv (MIM-815) and A.D. 941vv (MIM-816). As noted above, it is entirely possible that these derive from a burned pit structure beneath Room A9, as it was heavily disturbed by pothunters (probing revealed deep fill beneath A9). However, the fact that these are Douglas fir suggests that they may be from Room A9.

## Room A11

**Dimensions:** 7.1 by 6.2 m

**Floor area:** 44 m<sup>2</sup>

**Portion excavated:** Wall trenching only through 2000

**Walls:** Horizontally placed tuff and red rhyolite masonry, with footing of vertically set tuff slabs under all four walls. The south wall, at least the portion east of the door, evidently had a veneer like that in Room A92.

**Wall openings:** Doors in all four walls. The door into Room A116 must have had a step down because the floor elevations differed by 21 cm.

**Access:** Originally, exterior access was via the door



in the south wall, but this door was eventually sealed. Means of access thereafter is unknown, but may have been via a ceiling hatchway.

**Floor:** Adobe

**Hearth:** None present in excavated area

**Other floor features:** None present in excavated area

**Burials:** At least four but none specifically attributable to A11; any or all could be associated with underlying, earlier deposits. A large fragment of a killed Mimbres Black-on-white vessel was found in disturbed fill (Figure 141a) and probably derives from an unassociated burial underlying the northeast corner of this room or possibly an immediately adjacent area. Another large vessel fragment (see Figure 141b), found with the abovementioned sherd among additional sherds from other vessels, may also be from a pothunter-disturbed earlier burial.

**Destruction and abandonment:** A few fragments of burned timbers from disturbed fill along the walls suggests that this room burned at some point, but it is also possible that these timbers derive from underlying pit structures or possibly undetected Classic rooms.

**Dating:** No chronometric dates, but this room is clearly Terminal Classic.

## Room A57

**Dimensions:** 1.45 m north-south; east-west dimension is unknown but was at least 1.4 m.

**Floor area:** At least 2 m<sup>2</sup>

**Portion excavated:** All that was left by pothunters, who apparently destroyed the western portion.

**Walls:** Masonry. Walls on stone and adobe footings. The 26–30-cm-thick walls were built of tuff slabs in adobe, most of them laid horizontally but with intermittent vertical rocks set perpendicular to the wall axis. This type of masonry is very similar to that in nearby Room A1.

**Wall openings:** There was a modest amount of wall fall lying directly on the floor, including a series of tuff slabs aligned as if they represented a sealed door.

**Access:** Presumably via possible door in north wall  
**Floor:** Flagstone floor of thin, tabular rhyolite slabs laid on 5–6 cm of adobe (Figure 142)

**Hearth:** None known

**Other floor features:** None known

**Floor assemblage:** No artifacts lying on the floor

**Burials:** None known

**Destruction and abandonment:** No evidence other than the fact that part of the wall lay directly on the

floor. The lack of roof, burned or otherwise, suggests that the room was abandoned and allowed to decay, perhaps after usable timbers were salvaged.

**Dates:** None, but this is stratigraphically one of the latest additions to this room block.

**Comment:** The possibility of a door in the north wall would imply the existence of a room to the north but one that extended no further north than the south wall of Room A7 (given that the wall still stands roughly 1 m high).

## Room A61

Feature A61 is defined by a pair of adobe floors directly overlying Features A60-2 and A60-4 as well as the adobe surfaces adjacent to them. These floor remnants extend from the south wall of Room A57 for some 60 cm and west ca. 1.25 m from the southeast corner of A57. The only feature associated with these remnants is a small deposit of ash (A61-1) lying on the lower floor. This ash deposit and adjacent lower floor were overlain by another 2-cm-thick layer of distinctive adobe. The presence of the ash deposit and a bounding wall on at least one side led to the tentative designation of this area as a room; only additional excavation can potentially confirm this or, alternatively, the possibility that this was simply extramural space with prepared adobe surfaces.

## Room A62

Room A62 was identified during the 1997 season and the same area exposed again in 2003, but little is known of it primarily because excavation was limited. It lies immediately west of Room A2 and apparently had a flagstone floor during at least a portion of its use. This inference is based on the presence of one horizontal slab of tabular rhyolite embedded in floor adobe adjacent to the wall base in the very small exposure on the west side of the wall between A2 and A62. Given the extensive pothunter disturbance of higher deposits relating to later architecture as well as in floor-level deposits, it seems unlikely that much of the floor of Room A62 is intact. Similarly, no remnant of the west wall has been found, despite a trenching effort where we presumed the exterior to be.

## Room A92

**Dimensions:** 7.2 by 2.2 m (based on the presumption that veneer was present on all walls)

**Floor area:** 15.8 m<sup>2</sup>



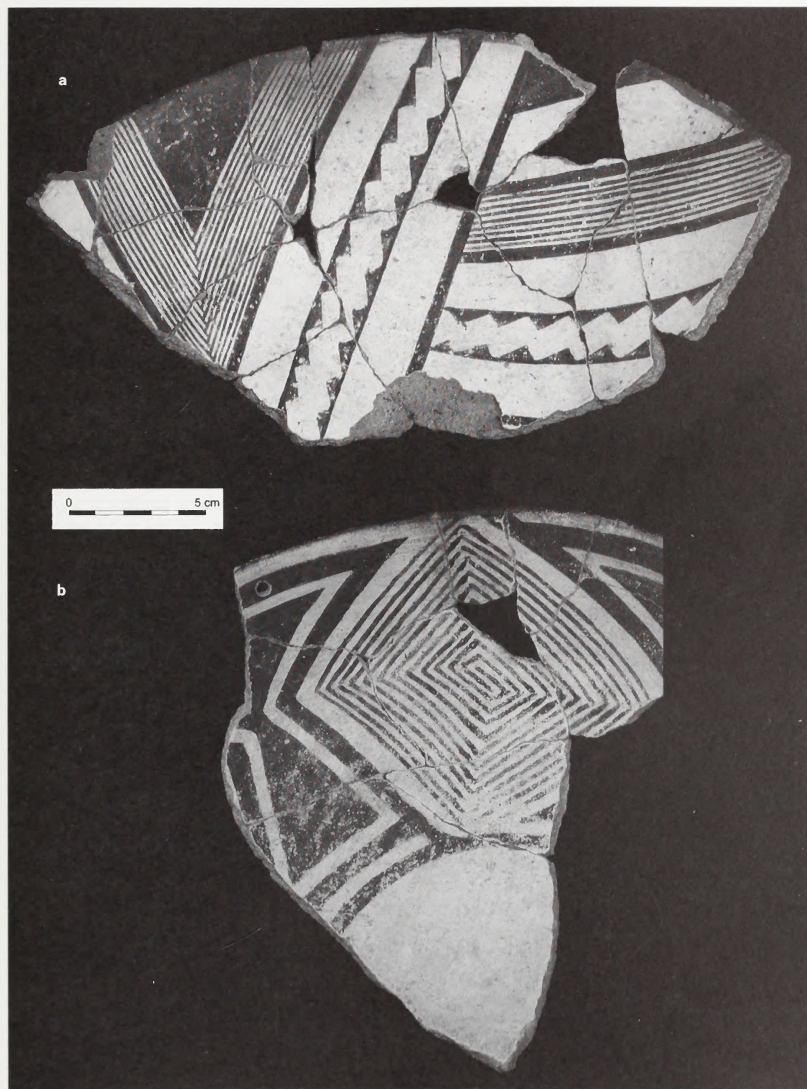


Figure 141. Vessel fragments in disturbed fill in the northwest corner of Room A11, probably from earlier burials: (a) Mimbres Black-on-white, Style II, probably killed; (b) Early Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III.

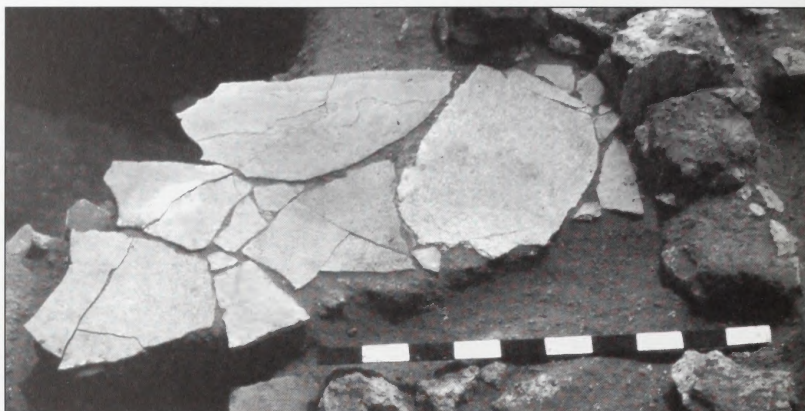


Figure 142. Flagstone floor remnant in Room A57.

**Portion excavated:** All; only the western 2 m was undisturbed.

**Walls:** Horizontally placed tuff and red rhyolite masonry, with footing of vertically set tuff slabs under north and east walls, probably under others as well (unverified). As noted earlier in this chapter, the south wall has a true veneer of small, thin, rhyolite slabs set horizontally in adobe. The veneer itself is some 15 cm or so thick (see Figure 123). This was applied to the much thicker, load-bearing masonry interior. It is preserved over all of the nearly 1-m-high wall remnant. The presence of large numbers of small rhyolite slabs underneath intact wall fall from the north and west walls suggests that they, too, had a veneer; if so, it is probable that the east wall was comparable.

**Wall openings:** No opening was preserved in any wall remnant, but it is presumed that there was one in the south wall, connecting with adjacent Room A110.

**Access:** Presumably from Room A110 via interior door in south wall

**Floor:** Two layers, the upper one adobe, the lower one flagstone set in adobe. These were separated by 3 cm of fill, and there was a thin layer of burned thatch between the fill and the base of the upper floor.

**Hearth:** None present in excavated area

**Other floor features:** None

**Burials:** None definitely attributable to this room

**Destruction and abandonment:** Given the considerable quantity of burned timber fragments in the disturbed fill, one might initially suspect that the

room burned; however, there was little in the way of a distinct layer of burned roof fall in the undisturbed portion, so it is probable that the charred timber fragments came from either underlying deposits or perhaps adjacent Room A110. Presumably, the room was abandoned and allowed to deteriorate.

**Dating:** No chronometric dates, but this room is clearly Terminal Classic.

## Room A110

**Dimensions:** 7.2 by 5.6 m

**Floor area:** 40.3 m<sup>2</sup>

**Portion excavated:** All. Heavily disturbed, with pothunter trenches along essentially all of the north, south, and west walls, as well as much of the east wall. In addition, pothunters had trenched all the way through the room, including the central ash deposits (Figures 143 and 144).

**Walls:** Horizontally placed tuff and red rhyolite masonry, with footing of vertically set tuff slabs under south, north, and east walls, probably under the west one as well (this wall was completely destroyed by pothunting).

**Wall openings:** Exterior door in south wall and door in east wall (see Figure 53) opening into Room A11. As noted for Room A92, it is presumed that there was a door in their common wall.

**Access:** Originally accessed via the exterior door in the south wall and from adjacent Room A11. Possibly accessed via Room A93 as well.

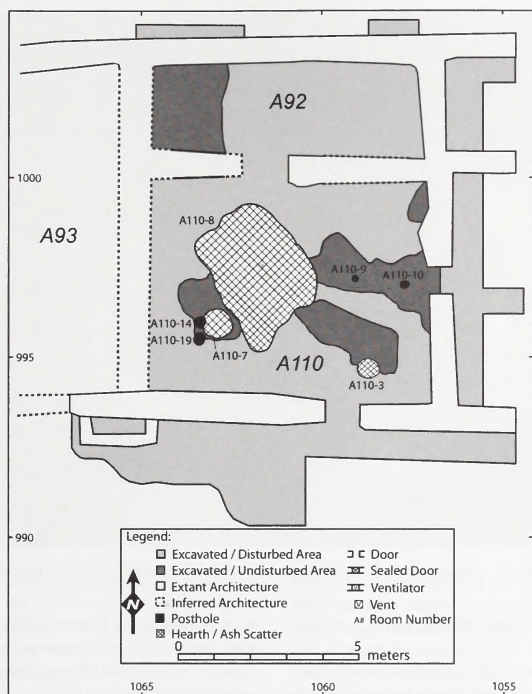


Figure 143. Plan of Rooms A92 and A110.



Figure 144. Photograph of A110 excavated, 2003, view east-southeast. Raised areas are undisturbed floor remnants with adjacent looter trenches.



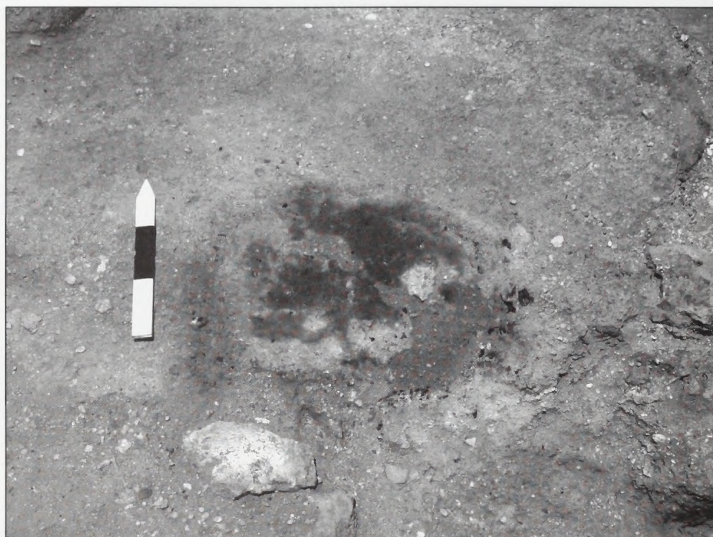


Figure 145. Small, unlined basin hearth (Feature A110-3) on upper floor in Room A110.

**Floor:** Two adobe floors, well-defined in preserved portions

**Hearth:** Very large (ca. 3 m across) central basin, Feature A110-8, filled with compacted ash to depth of approximately 30 cm; evidently in use with both floors (see Figure 143). On each floor, small, unlined round/oval hearths are located in the southeast and southwest corners, and all are filled with ash and charcoal (Figure 145).

**Other floor features:** Upper floor had one large, burned post and a small concentration of rabbit bones. The lower floor also had the large post as well as several small postholes and a concentration of small slabs (function unknown).

**Burials:** The skeletal material recovered from disturbed deposits along the walls represents at least five individuals presumed to have come from sub-floor burials. However, owing to disturbance, they could not be associated with Room A110, underlying Room A123, or possibly even earlier deposits. If they were in fact associated with Room A110, at least three individuals would appear to have been interred along the north wall, one along the south wall, and possibly an infant along the east wall. It is also possible that some, if not much, of the

skeletal material in disturbed fill in adjacent Room A92 derived from this room, so the minimum number of individuals represented may well be somewhat larger.

**Destruction and abandonment:** We found little on the floor remnants of this room, so we tentatively infer that it was cleared of useful objects at the time it was abandoned. The burned post and a modest amount of burned thatch in what may have been roof context suggests that the room was then burned. However, relative to other rooms at Old Town, regardless of age, there was comparatively little evidence of burning: no burned roof adobe, roof beams (with a couple of possible exceptions in disturbed fill), or burned wall plaster. Clearly, there was some burning in this room, but it does not appear to have been comprehensive or catastrophic. Perhaps it was very selective.

**Dating:** With considerable difficulty, archaeomagnetic samples were collected from two of the small unlined hearths (A110-3 and A110-7, both on upper floor) but neither yielded a date. We were unable to collect samples from the other features. Several burned timber fragments were recovered from disturbed fill, mostly in the central portion of the room; it seems likely that these were originally in or immediately

adjacent to Feature A110-8, the large ash deposit. The large roof-support post was collected with some difficulty, as it had been set approximately 1 m deep in a hole dug into bedrock. None of these specimens yielded a date. Nonetheless, it is clear that this room is clearly Terminal Classic.

## Feature A111

**Dimensions:** 0.5 by 1.0 m

**Floor area:** 0.5 m<sup>2</sup>

**Portion excavated:** All

**Walls:** Tuff boulders set horizontally in adobe; small slabs are set vertically along the wall bases.

**Wall openings:** None known

**Access:** No data

**Floor:** Flagstone floor

**Hearth:** None

**Other floor features:** None

**Burials:** None

**Destruction and abandonment:** No data other than lack of evidence for burning.

**Dating:** No chronometric dates, but Feature A111 was added onto A110 and therefore dates to Stage 2 or possibly later.

**Comment:** No evidence precludes this having been an interior bin of the sort found at the Swarts Ruin (Cosgrove and Cosgrove 1932:19). Our very limited excavation around the walls of A111 found no floor that would suggest that A111 was inside a room, although all of this area had been disturbed by pothunting.

## Room A112

If we have correctly matched our excavations to Nels Nelson's 1920 map of the site, Room A112 would be one of three rooms for which he provided measurements. He gave dimensions as 9 by 16 feet for a room in this location, whereas our measurements are 7.4 by 17.7 feet (see below for metric dimensions). The difference between the two is approximately 1.5 feet for each dimension and may be attributable to his measuring this room based on pacing (this is not specified in his notes) or perhaps because it was not yet fully exposed by pothunters. Another room for which he gives dimensions must have been measured by taping, as he gives dimensions to the inch.

**Dimensions:** ca. 5.4 by 2.25 m (exact length is uncertain owing to complete pothunter destruction of west wall).

**Floor area:** ca. 12 m<sup>2</sup>

**Portion excavated:** Approximately 90 percent excavated, much of it previously disturbed by pothunting; the western, thoroughly pothunter-disturbed end was not excavated.

**Walls:** Horizontally placed tuff and red rhyolite masonry (see Figure 129), with footing of vertically set tuff slabs under north and south walls, probably under others as well (unverified). Sugarlump rhyolite slabs are set vertically along the base of the north, east, and south walls (see Figure 129); the destroyed west wall presumably had such slabs as well. The east wall was thickened at some point during use of this room.

**Wall openings:** There is a partially destroyed door (based on width and height of threshold above floor) in the south wall, connecting with adjacent Room A9. There is also a ventilator in the east wall that was lengthened when the wall itself was thickened (see Figure 127). The ventilator is lined with rhyolite slabs and had slab lintels; its outside opening is at ground surface about 50 cm higher than floor level. The ventilator was ultimately sealed.

**Access:** Apparently from Room A9 via interior door

**Floor:** Flagstone set in adobe (see Figure 129)

**Hearth:** None present in excavated area

**Other floor features:** Posthole in east central portion of room, presumably held a roof-support post; counterpart projected to have been present in pothunter-disturbed western portion.

**Burials:** None

**Destruction and abandonment:** No evidence of burning and no objects on floor remnant, although there was a concentration of sherds representing a small portion of a Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, jar. Presumed to have been abandoned and allowed to deteriorate.

**Dating:** No chronometric dates, but this room is clearly Terminal Classic.

**Additional observations:** Two notched slabs were found during excavations of Room A112 (see Figure 130), but because they were in disturbed fill, their association with A112 is unclear and their function unknown. As discussed in a previous chapter and earlier in this chapter, however, it is possible that these notched slabs functioned to support a bench, platform, or similar feature; they could also have supported a raised floor (Figure 146 depicts a speculative rendition of Room A112 with a raised floor that could have served to dry corn or other crops). We do not know how many were in the room originally or even

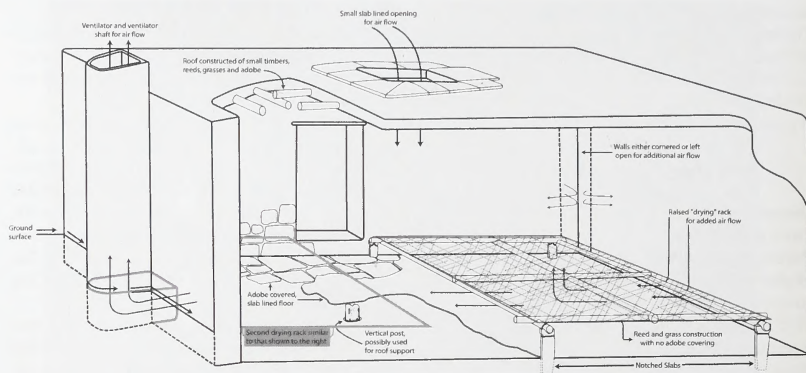


Figure 146. Speculative reconstruction of Room A112 with raised floor (adapted from an original drawing by Shari Chandler, used with permission).

if they were anything more than recycled slabs, so we can only speculate on their function in this room. However, if we have correctly identified this as the room photographed by Nelson in 1920, there would have been quite a number of notched slabs in it. Given its narrow width, benches approximately 40–50 cm wide on the north and south walls would have made for a very modest open floor area. Benches on the east and west walls would have been less restrictive.

## Room A116

**Dimensions:** 7.6 by 2.4 m

**Floor area:** 18.2 m<sup>2</sup>

**Portion excavated:** Wall trenching only through 2000; excavation of northeast corner in 2003

**Walls:** Horizontally placed tuff and red rhyolite masonry with footing of vertically set tuff slabs under the north, south, and west walls, presumably under the east wall as well

**Wall openings:** Door in the south wall connecting with Room A11. There must have been a step down at door from Room A116 because the floor elevations differed by 21 cm.

**Access:** Access was via the door in the south wall from Room A11.

**Floor:** Two floors, each adobe, one directly on top of the other

**Hearth:** None known

**Other floor features:** No data

**Burials:** None known

**Destruction and abandonment:** No information other than that the room evidently did not burn

**Dating:** No chronometric dates, but this room is clearly Terminal Classic.

## Room A123

**Dimensions:** Minimally 3–4 m north-south and east-west

**Floor area:** Minimally 9 m<sup>2</sup>

**Portion excavated:** The preserved upper floor within limits of overlying Room A110 was fully excavated, as was a small portion of the lower floor.

**Walls:** No information, as no walls have been identified.

**Wall openings:** None known

**Access:** No data

**Floor:** Two floors, each adobe, one directly on top of the other

**Hearth:** Remnant of ash-filled basin mostly destroyed by pothunter trench

**Other floor features:** No data

**Burials:** None known

**Destruction and abandonment:** Walls are presumed to have been demolished to provide for construction of Room A110 and perhaps adjacent A11.

**Dating:** No chronometric dates





Figure 147. Feature A60-1, adobe-mixing basin below flagstone floor of Room A57.

### Feature A108

Feature A108 appears to have been an extramural area immediately adjacent to Rooms A11 and A110, with doors into each. Our investigations were limited to trenching along the exterior of the south wall of these two rooms and additional investigation of the location for an eastern edge to A108. On his map of Area A, Nels Nelson marked what he thought to be a courtyard that would probably be in this location. For the most part, our trenching proved to follow pothunter trenches; yet, in the sides of the trench, it was clear that there was no floor like those found in nearby rooms. On this basis alone, we tentatively presume that our Feature A108 is the courtyard observed by Nelson in 1920. If so, it may have been bounded on the east, north, and west sides by pueblo rooms. Its south side may have been walled (at least, Nelson's map implies this), but no specific indication of a wall is presently observable. We estimate from his map and our investigations that this courtyard would have been approximately 16 m east-west and 11 m

north-south. The presence of tiny Feature A111, however, suggests that the projected location of the west side may be incorrect. Deep deposits underlie Feature A108, at least on its north side, and likely include pit houses completely filled and overlain by later Classic debris.

### Feature/Room A60

Primarily as a result of extensive pothunting, but also because our excavations were limited, we could not determine if the suite of features designated Feature/Room A60 and originally interpreted to be interior hearths and ash pits was actually in a room rather than an extramural activity area. No walls could be associated with these two large, round pits interpreted during excavation as adobe-mixing basins but most of the surrounding area had been thoroughly disturbed. Feature A60-1 had been partially destroyed by pothunting but was complete enough to reveal its shape and basic dimensions (ca. 90 cm in diameter) (Figure 147). It partially truncated an earlier and apparently similar feature, A60-3. Adobe flooring

capped the fill of A60-3 between its east rim and that of A60-1. Sometime later, the footing trench for Room A57's south wall cut through the southern portion of A60-3.

Feature A60-2 is an apparently round, ash-filled basin ca. 60 cm across immediately adjacent to Feature A60-1. Like A60-3, Feature A60-2 had been bisected by the digging of the footing trench for later Room A57, an event that also removed any direct evidence for its stratigraphic relationship to A60-1 and A60-3. However, their close proximity and the fact that the rims of all three features have the same elevation indicate contemporaneity, at least for A60-1 and A60-2. In addition, Feature A60-2 had been remodeled by capping the thick, lower ash deposit with a thin layer of adobe, on top of which another thick deposit of ash was placed, suggesting that the use of Feature A60-2 spanned the time during which A60-1 and then A60-3 were in use. If A60-1 and A60-3 were adobe-mixing basins, it is presumed that they were extramural.

Finally, Feature A60-4 is the remnant of a shallow basin in the adobe surface immediately adjacent to and south of Feature A60-2. Because of pothunting, little of this feature remained, but we suspect that it was circular, perhaps 60 cm in diameter. There was a thin deposit of ash on the portion still present.

## **Construction and Remodeling Sequence**

The sequence of construction and remodeling events in this room block would likely have been relatively easy to define were it not for the extensive pothunter destruction. Although I have previously proposed that the entire room block was built in one construction episode, a comprehensive assessment of the data leads to a different conclusion—namely, that there were two major construction events. In particular, the evidence suggests that the original construction, herein designated Stage 1, was the group of rooms on the east end of the room block, from Room A7 east through Room A1 (see Figure 120). It is also possible that this room block extended further west, including Room A123, or that another contemporaneous room block (with A123) existed just to the west. Whether Stage 1 rooms were all built at the same time or at somewhat different times cannot be determined owing to extensive pothunter disturbance. However, as discussed below, the rooms contain a ceramic suite in their construction adobe (floor, walls, and roof) and

in underlying trash that differs slightly from Stage 2 rooms, a difference that presumably reflects their somewhat earlier date. In addition, they are distinctive in the alignment of their walls and are thus further distinguishable from Stage 2 rooms.

Stage 2 rooms appear to have been built in a single construction episode. This assessment is based on bonded corners, similarity of masonry, and alignment. Separate, minor modifications made elsewhere in the room block may or may not have been contemporaneous with the second major construction event. The last recognized construction event (herein designated Stage 3) was the building of Room A57 and possible adjacent rooms in the southeast portion of the room block, but we do not know when this modest construction occurred relative to Stage 2 construction. It could postdate it or be at least in part contemporaneous.

Undisturbed deposits were present beneath all of the excavated rooms in this room block, usually beneath the central part of each room (Table 21). In terms of ceramics, the undisturbed deposits beneath the floors of and in the construction adobe of Stage 1 rooms contain essentially all of the types known to the area through Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, but they also consistently contain small quantities of El Paso Polychrome, Playas incised (both unslipped and red slipped), Playas corrugated, and Reserve Black-on-white (see Table 21). Lesser numbers of untyped black smudged and El Paso Bichrome or early polychrome were also present. Thus, vessels of these ceramic types were present at the site, had been used, broken, and discarded prior to Stage 1 construction.

It is important to note, as shown in Table 21, that ceramics in undisturbed fill beneath Stage 2 rooms as well as in wall, roof, and floor adobe include the same types as in the same Stage 1 contexts but also additional types such as Chupadero Black-on-white, Reserve/Tularosa Smudged Corrugated, spiral rubbed, and Playas Red Cordmarked. Thus, the sample reveals a slight difference in the ceramic assemblages predating each of the two main construction stages. There are, thus, both architectural and ceramic differences between Stages 1 and 2 that indicate a slight temporal difference. It is difficult to determine the gap between the construction of Stages 1 and 2, partly because tree-ring or archaeomagnetic dates are lacking, and partly because the beginning date for these ceramic types is not well enough known. However, the presence of some 10–20 cm of trash containing these non-Mimbres pottery types underneath Room A92 suggests the passage of some

**Table 21. Late Non-Mimbres Pottery Types in Stages 1 and 2 in Terminal Classic Room Block**

Ceramic Type	Stage 1 Rooms		Stage 2 Rooms		Total
	Undisturbed Fill beneath Floors and in Construction Material	Floor Feature Fill, Fill above, and/or Disturbed Fill	Undisturbed Fill beneath Floors and in Construction Material	Floor Feature Fill, Fill above, and/or Disturbed Fill	
El Paso Polychrome	8	37 <sup>a</sup>	—	45	90
Playas corrugated <sup>b</sup>	7	54 <sup>a</sup>	—	9	70
Playas incised <sup>b</sup>	16	70 <sup>a</sup>	—	46	132
Playas Red Corrugated	1	—	14	6	21
Playas Red Incised	4	—	24	9	37
Reserve B/W	3	4	—	4	11
Chupadero B/W	—	19	9	22	50
Reserve-Tularosa Smudged Corrugated	—	4	6	14	24
Three Rivers Red-on-terracotta	—	4 <sup>c</sup>	—	2	6
Playas Red Cordmarked	—	—	2	3	5
Spiral rubbed (corrugated) <sup>d</sup>	—	—	8	7	15
White Mountain Red Ware	—	—	—	1	1
Total	39	192	63	168	462

Note: Number of sherds for all types and all contexts totals 17,884 for Stage 1 rooms, 5,841 for Stage 2 rooms, and 23,725 for both stages (total sherds).

<sup>a</sup> Mostly disturbed fill.

<sup>b</sup> These ceramics are not red slipped.

<sup>c</sup> Disturbed fill only.

<sup>d</sup> As described by Cosgrove and Cosgrove 1932.

Key: B/W = Black-on-white

years, perhaps even a decade or so. If Stage 1 was built sometime around A.D. 1120–1130, then Stage 2 may have been built around A.D. 1130 or 1140 (as noted later in this chapter, this dating of Stages 1 and 2 may be slightly too late).

It should perhaps also be noted that most of these non-Mimbres pottery types are represented by several vessels, although few vessels are themselves represented in our collection by more than one or two sherds. There are, for example, at least 25 Chupadero Black-on-white vessels (11 bowls, 14 jars), 19 Tularosa Smudged Corrugated bowls, and several vessels of El Paso Polychrome and most of the Playas varieties. Significantly less common are Three Rivers Red-on-terracotta, White Mountain Red Ware, and

Playas Red Cordmarked. Thus, although the total number of sherds of these types in the collection is modest, it is substantial enough, we think, to reflect real trends.

If we correctly interpret the data, this is the first possible indication of temporal differences within the suite of putative post-Classic ceramics in Classic Mimbres sites. If our modest sample is reliable, it indicates that early El Paso painted ware types, unslipped Playas types, and probably Playas Red Incised were introduced to Old Town (and presumably other Mimbres sites) slightly before Chupadero Black-on-white, Reserve/Tularosa Smudged Corrugated, Playas Red Cordmarked and Corrugated, and Spiral Rubbed.



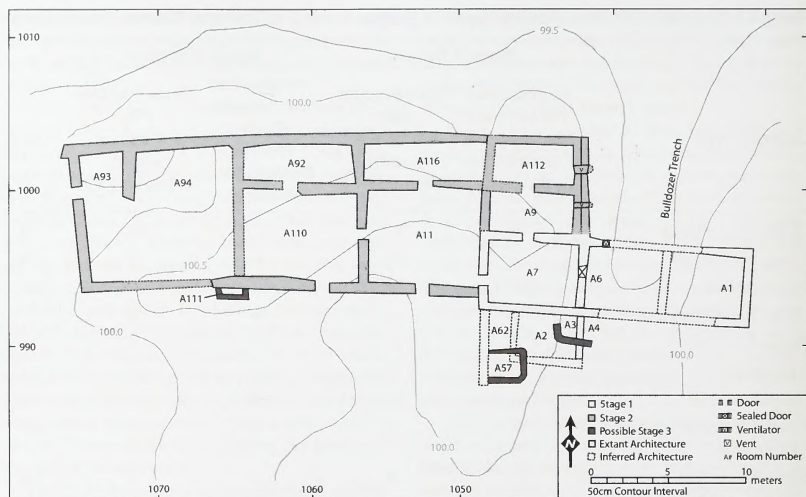


Figure 148. Construction sequence for Terminal Classic room block.

## Stage 1

As best we can determine, the earliest part of the room block consists of three suites of rooms: A1 (and possibly a room adjacent to the west, presumed to have been present prior to bulldozing); A2/A62 and A6/A7 (Figure 148). What masonry remains differs in the walls of each suite, although precious little was actually preserved in the A1 and A2/A62 suites. These apparent differences suggest, but do not necessarily mean, that each suite may have been built at slightly different times. No evidence found so far indicates the possible sequence of suite construction, if indeed they were not built at the same time.

There is some evidence suggestive of second-story rooms above Room A7. This is suggested by wall footings, evidence of a possible second-story door above the A7/A9 wall, and possible second-story roof fall in Room A7.

Access to the A7 suite appears to have been via a ground level door in A7's west wall. Insofar as can be determined, access to the A2 suite appears to have been via a ceiling hatchway, as suggested by a possible ladder-pole hole in the original floor (the second of the pair presumed to have been destroyed by pothunting). We have no evidence one way or another for means of access to the A1 suite.

## Stage 2

Stage 2 is a better-defined unit primarily because of the apparently continuous wall on the north side; it seems likely that the parallel south wall was also continuous prior to pothunter destruction (see Figure 148). Rooms built during this stage were A9 and A112 on the north side of Stage 1 Room A7 and A11, A92, A93, A110, and A116 on the west side of A7. Evidently, the door in the west wall of Room A7 was maintained so that Stage 1 and Stage 2 rooms were interconnected; the conversion of the door in A7's north wall to a vent presumably occurred as part of, or after, construction of Room A9.

During Stage 2, at least two, and possibly three, virtually identical room suites were built: A11/A116, A110/A92, and the poorly defined A93 suite. Each of these apparently consisted of a very large room on the south connected by a door to a long, narrow room on the north. It is interesting to note that the A11 and A110 suites were themselves connected by a doorway, and on this basis, one suspects that the A110 and A93 suites were similarly connected. If so, the concept of a room suite, as applied to the others in this room block and Classic sites elsewhere in the Mimbres area, may be less appropriate. This is especially true if, as appears to have been the case,

the door in the A7/A11 wall was still open when A11 was built.

Access to the A11 and A110 suites was via exterior ground-level doors in the south wall. These evidently opened into an enclosed courtyard; at least, Nels Nelson thought there was such a courtyard in this area when he recorded the site in 1920. Our very modest excavations in this area, immediately adjacent to walls, revealed what looks like an extramural surface (Feature A108). It is presumed that the A93 suite was also accessed via an exterior door on the south side.

In contrast to these suites, Rooms A9 and A112<sup>+</sup> are smaller and, significantly, each had a ventilator. In this regard, they are unlike any other surface pueblo rooms excavated so far at Old Town and were evidently connected via a door. At some point, the east wall of Rooms A9 and A112 was thickened to approximately 1 m and the ventilators in each extended accordingly. It is possible that this was done to accommodate second-story construction, for which there is limited evidence. Rooms A9 and A112 evidently continued to be used, although at some point their ventilators were sealed and the use of the rooms presumably changed as well.

## Possible Stage 3

As noted previously, the last substantial construction event that we have recognized was the building of Room A57 and possible adjacent rooms. Clearly, these were built over Rooms A2 and A62 after they had been demolished, but, in fact, we do not know when this modest construction occurred relative to Stage 2 building. It could have taken place at the same time, earlier, or later.

## Room Suites

If our assessment of the architectural remains and the sequence of construction is reasonable, it permits an interesting evaluation of changing room suites. Following Shafer (1982), Mimbres suites are defined as groups of interconnected rooms, one of which was usually larger, had a hearth, and had subfloor burials. Such rooms are generally considered to have been living rooms. The other room (or rooms) in Classic suites was generally smaller and lacked a hearth but occasionally had one to a few subfloor burials. Such rooms are generally considered to have been used for storage.

The room suites that we tentatively identify in Stage 1 architecture are A6/A7, A2/A62, and A1,

each hereafter referred to by the number given to the room with a hearth. Thus, there are A2 and A7 suites; the third is referred to as the A1 suite, although we do not know whether it (or the room inferred to have been present and connected via a door, but destroyed by bulldozing) had a hearth. Basically, given the destruction by bulldozing, we cannot be certain that there were two rooms in this suite or even that it was a suite separate from the A7 suite. Thus, we are tentatively making an assumption based in large part on room suites at other Mimbres sites (Hegmon et al. 2007; Shafer 1982).

In Stage 1, the Room A7 suite would have been the largest in terms of total floor area (ca. 32–34 m<sup>2</sup>). The less well-defined A2 suite is projected at slightly over 20 m<sup>2</sup>, and the A1 suite is very roughly projected at 30 m<sup>2</sup>. There was, thus, only a modest difference in floor area between the suites, although a possible second-story room would have substantially increased the size of the A7 suite.

At some point, the A7 suite evidently changed significantly with the sealing of the door between A7 and A6. There is no way to know when this occurred, but it may well have been done when the east walls of Stage 2 Rooms A9 and A112 were thickened. If so, one might infer that this was done to strengthen the wall so that it would better support a second story. Subsequent use of Room A6 is unknown.

In any event, Stage 2 construction may have encompassed a group of at least four, perhaps six, and possibly more interconnected, large rooms. This group seems to have been composed of suites, each consisting of one very large, nearly square room and a smaller rectangular room. The two suites tentatively identified are A11/A116 and A110/A92; A11 and A110 are the larger rooms in each. In both of these two large rooms, there was an exterior door apparently opening onto a courtyard (Feature A108).

Rooms A110 and A92 are believed to have constituted a suite, but the extensive pothunter destruction of the common wall would have eliminated the door presumed to have been present based on the presence of such a door in the adjacent A11/A116 suite. Assuming there was a door, as seems reasonable, the A110/A92 suite is the only one that has been extensively excavated. It has a floor area of 56 m<sup>2</sup>. There was a well-preserved door in the wall between A110 and similar-size Room A11, but we do not know if there was a door in the west wall of Room A110.

The more confidently identified A11/A116 suite is slightly larger at ca. 62 m<sup>2</sup>, but it has been far less extensively excavated. Indeed, neither room in this

suite has been subject to more than trenching along the walls.

As noted previously, we do not know if the large space just west of Room A110 designated Room A93 represents another comparable suite, but in very limited testing we found no evidence for an east-west wall on the same alignment as the common A110/A92 and A11/A116 walls. Whether there was such a wall (destroyed by pothunting) or whether A93 and A94 together constitute a similar, but much larger, room suite is unknown.

In any event, the size of room suites appears to have increased from Stage 1 to Stage 2, and rooms with different functions were possibly added as well. In the following section, the possible significance of the large Stage 2 suites is discussed at some length.

## Discussion

As best one can determine given their condition, Stage 1 room suites are little different from Classic suites found in previous years at other sites in the Mimbres area. Stage 2 suites are, at first glance, more difficult to compare but, on closer examination, appear to be little different from certain architectural units found at several other Mimbres sites. Among the best-documented, potentially comparable suites known to me are at the NAN Ranch, Swarts, and possibly other sites, such as Woodrow and Eby. Most are characterized by relatively massive masonry construction and large rooms. Few of these have been dated by means other than ceramic associations and bond-abut sequencing, although a small number also have tree-ring dates.

### Large-Room Suites at Other Mimbres Sites

At NAN Ranch, two and possibly more, similar suites to those at Old Town have been excavated and are considered late Classic (Shafer 2003). They are potentially relevant in terms of dating Terminal Classic architecture at Old Town and evaluating room/suite use. In the NAN east room block, one suite consisted of Rooms 41 and 42 (Figure 149). The former is a large rectangular room (32.5 m<sup>2</sup>) identified by Shafer as a "corporate kiva" in part because of its rectangular hearth and adjacent floor vault (see also Burden 2001). It is important to note that the masonry walls of Rooms 41 and 42 were

not massively built like the Stage 2 rooms at Old Town or like some other rooms at NAN (see discussion of Room 39 below). Room 41 was connected to long, narrow Room 42 (12 m<sup>2</sup>) by a doorway, but Room 42 was believed to have been an addition to Room 41, not built at the same time. According to Shafer (2003:100), Room 41 was built ca. A.D. 1060—an estimate based on middle and late Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, ceramics in associated subfloor burials—and refloored on several occasions thereafter. A burned beam on the floor yielded a cutting date of A.D. 1107, suggesting to Shafer that this room was last remodeled at about that time. A smudged bowl was on the floor of Room 42; a late, Style III, bowl was found on the floor of Room 41; and a smudged bowl was one of several vessels with burials beneath the floor of Room 41.

Adjacent to Room 41 was Room 74 (see Figure 149), a large (35 m<sup>2</sup>) rectangular room with a small, round hearth and several vessels on the floor. Because the area immediately adjacent on the east was not excavated, it is not known if there was a connected room, but a break in the east wall of Room 74 may have been a doorway (identified in the 1986 season report as a vent). If so, one can envision a room much like Room 42 that, with Room 74, would have constituted a suite comparable to 41/42. There were no chronometric dates from Room 74, but it was added onto Room 84, from which there was a single tree-ring date of A.D. 1128v. In addition, among the many complete vessels on the floor was an El Paso Bichrome jar. Shafer (2003:76) has interpreted these data as indicating that Room 74 was constructed sometime soon after A.D. 1128.

In the NAN south room block, Rooms 39 and 90 may also represent a large-room suite like those at Old Town (see Figure 149). Room 39 was a large (36 m<sup>2</sup>), square room with a small, round hearth, identified as a civic-ceremonial room, and Room 90 was a long, narrow room (15.5 m<sup>2</sup>). According to Shafer (2003:93), Room 39 was built ca. A.D. 1099, and Room 90 was added on ca. A.D. 1116. Because there are no chronometric dates for either room, the dating of Rooms 39 and 90 is based on multiple tree-ring dates for adjacent rooms and analysis of the wall bond/abut sequence. Room 39 had an opening in the common wall with Room 90, which Shafer noted was originally a crawlway that was later blocked to create a niche in Room 39. Although Room 90's walls appear to have been added onto Room 39, the presence of the crawlway suggests, but does not prove, that both rooms were built as a suite. It is



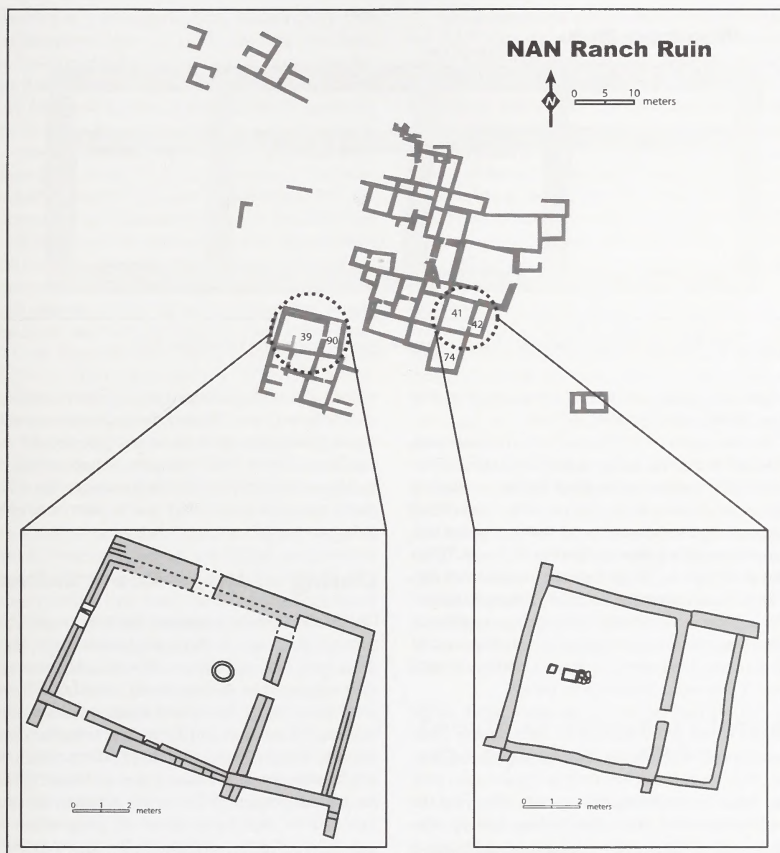


Figure 149. Classic architecture at the NAN Ranch site with large room suites.

interesting to note that an El Paso Polychrome vessel was either on the floor or roof of Room 39 (or perhaps deposited as trash on the collapsed structure). In this regard, Shafer (2003:95) noted that the Room 39 area at NAN was more massively built than contemporaneous rooms elsewhere at the site, and its rubble mound was the highest at the site.

If NAN Rooms 39 and 90 were built as a suite, it would be very similar in plan and size to NAN Room

41/42 suite (and the Room 74 suite if there was a connected room on its east side) and to the Stage 2 suites at Old Town. Shafer considered the NAN 41/42 suite to have been a corporate kiva but thought Room 39 to have been civic-ceremonial and distinctly different from the suite. Room 74, in turn, is considered to have been a storage room, at least late in its use. The only Old Town Stage 2 suite with adequate data is A110/92. Given this room's massive ash deposit/hearth and at least two smaller hearths, Room A110 would appear

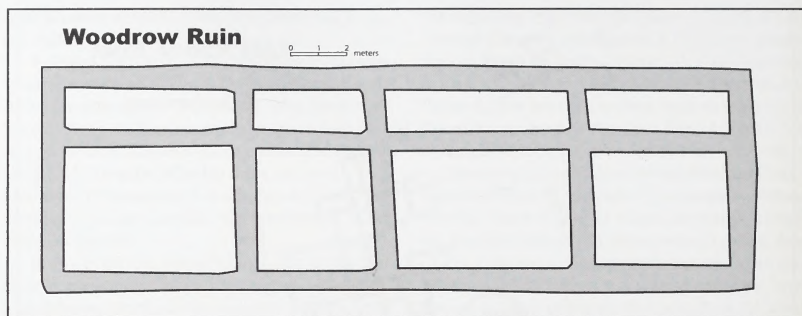


Figure 150. Plan of the massive room block near the great kivas at the Woodrow site.

to have had a civic-ceremonial function and is thus much like Rooms 39 and 41 at NAN.

In their report on the Swarts Ruin, the Cosgroves noted that the rooms in the eastern and southern portions of the northern room block had more massive masonry walls than did rooms elsewhere. Several of these are larger rooms, and in the southern part of this room block, are in pairs (e.g., Rooms 50/51 and 52/53) very much like the Stage 2 rooms at Old Town and those previously discussed at NAN, although smaller. That is, there is a relatively large, nearly square room with a long, narrow room attached (though one cannot tell from the Cosgroves' or Hill's [1997] published plans if they were connected by doors).

Also of interest here is the room block at the Woodrow site just northeast of the southern great kiva. As shown in Figure 150 (courtesy Steve Lekson), this room block has a rather regular plan with four large rooms (estimated at nearly 30 m<sup>2</sup> for the two largest), each with an adjacent long, narrow room on the north. With regard to both layout and massive construction, this room block is reminiscent of the Stage 2 rooms at Old Town, although no doorways are indicated on Lekson's Woodrow room block plan, nor were any seen during a 2004 visit. Nonetheless, its layout is similar to that at Old Town and, to a lesser extent, to the previously mentioned suites at NAN and Swarts.

According to Lekson, this room block was massively constructed, unlike the other, presumably contemporaneous room blocks at the site. During a visit to Woodrow in late 2004, I inspected this room block in order to look for doorways and to assess its purported massiveness. Although all, or nearly all, of the rooms had unfortunately long since been excavated, this masonry remains readily

visible. The walls do indeed seem massive, but this may be in large part because the pothunters expeditiously placed the room fill on and just beyond the standing exterior wall remnants. Consequently, it is difficult to determine just how massive the walls really were, although they were most assuredly quite substantial.

## Dating of Large-Room Suites

One of the relevant questions about these possible suites is their age. Is there any evidence that they are a very late, or Terminal Classic phenomenon as is suggested by the admittedly biased Old Town data? Considering the meager dating evidence from the Stage 2 suites at Old Town, one finds the most relevant data in Stage 1 Room A7. There, only one of the two tree-ring dates, from disturbed fill in the eastern portion of Room A7, appears relevant: A.D. 1107±v. Whether it relates to construction or remodeling, if either, is unknown. But as noted earlier in this chapter, Room A7 and adjacent rooms were built after the introduction of El Paso Bichrome and early El Paso Polychrome as well as some varieties of Playa ceramics.

Construction of NAN Room 39 was inferentially placed by Shafer (2003) at ca. A.D. 1099, Room 74 at ca. A.D. 1128, but that of the 41/42 suite at ca. A.D. 1060 with remodeling ca. A.D. 1107. Shafer's estimation of Room 41's construction date is apparently based solely on middle Style III pottery in associated burials, but Shafer (2003:184) dates middle Style III at A.D. 1050–1110. Thus, nothing necessarily precludes construction of Rooms 41 and 42 later than A.D. 1060, even A.D. 1100, and closer to the apparent construction dates of the others. Indeed, on the

basis of a very thorough analysis, Burden (2001:154) has interpreted the A.D. 1107r tree-ring date from Room 41 roof fall as a construction, not a remodeling, date and noted that the construction of adjacent, very large and massive-walled Room 45 postdates that of Room 41.

Dating evidence from the Mimbres Foundation's excavation at the Matlocks site also is relevant. Beneath partially excavated Classic Room 237, the excavators found undisturbed deposits that contained a few Playas sherds and some El Paso Brown Ware (Pat Gilman, personal communication 2004). This is consistent with the previously discussed instances of such ceramics at Old Town. It is interesting to note that there were several tree-ring dates from Room 237, the latest of which was A.D. 1095r (others are 1010+vv, 1021vv, and 1060+vv). Given the ceramics beneath the floor, the A.D. 1095r date is probably closer to the construction date.

The introduction of these non-Mimbres pottery types into the Mimbres area is not very well dated, but I previously argued that it probably occurred after A.D. 1120 (Creel 1999a:117). That argument was based on the apparent lack of such pottery types at Pueblo Vinegaroon, a small, late Classic pueblo which yielded several tree-ring dates in the A.D. 1100–1116vv range (similar data from the Elk Ridge site [Karl Laumbach, personal communication 1998]). However, it is interesting that pertinent contexts at Old Town, NAN, and Matlocks all return tree-ring dates around A.D. 1100 (though these are few in number and some are from disturbed contexts). Nonetheless, I am now inclined to think we should consider the possibility that early varieties of Playas, El Paso Bichrome, and El Paso Polychrome were entering Mimbres sites in the first decade of the A.D. 1100s, possibly even a bit earlier given the Matlocks site data.

Using A.D. 1108 or so, then, as the earliest possible date for construction of Old Town Room A7 but acknowledging that it could be a decade or so later, one can guess that at least a few years passed before the construction of the A110/92 suite and the other Stage 2 rooms. As discussed earlier in this chapter, numerous vessels of other pottery types such as Chupadero Black-on-white, Playas Red Cordmarked, Reserve/Tularosa Smudged Corrugated, and Spiral Rubbed were brought into or made at Old Town, used, broken, and discarded after construction of Stage 1 rooms but prior to construction of Stage 2 rooms. Thus, it seems likely that Stage 2 construction at Old Town occurred sometime around A.D. 1110–1120, although it may have been somewhat later.

Given these facts, one can readily recognize that the NAN data on large room suites are, to some extent, consistent with the Old Town data in suggesting that these large-room suites are quite late in the Classic period. The principal exception might be the NAN 41/42 suite in having the rectangular, slab-lined hearth instead of the round or oval hearths typical of the late or Terminal Classic period. Shafer believed that this room suite was built around A.D. 1060, although the evidence is also consistent with construction in the early A.D. 1100s. Regardless, neither construction nor remodeling is solidly dated for any of these important rooms at NAN or Old Town. Evidence for the age of the possible room suites at Swarts and Eby sites is meager at best, basically consisting of pottery vessels with subfloor burials. As for the previously discussed room block at Woodrow, so far as I am aware, there is no evidence for its age, so it is difficult to argue for a late Classic construction.

In sum, there is some reason to believe that many, if not most, of the large-room suites at Old Town, NAN, and perhaps the other sites are quite late, postdating A.D. 1100 and perhaps reflect changing social contexts in Mimbres villages. Some, but not all, of these had massive masonry walls, as was the case with Stage 2 rooms at Old Town. Similarly, not all of these suites had rooms as large as those at Old Town and NAN; those at Swarts are the main possible exceptions.

## Length of Terminal Classic Occupation at Old Town

Extensive remodeling of Stage 1 Rooms A2, A6, and A7 suggests a considerable period of use for these rooms. Room A2 had five floors and Rooms A6 and A7, two each. The apparently substantial number of burials in Room A7 is also consistent with lengthy use. If, as discussed above, the Douglas fir beam fragment from disturbed fill in the eastern portion of Room A7 was original construction wood, then that room (and perhaps A6 as well) was built sometime after A.D. 1107 (A.D. 1107+v).

Reflooring of Stage 2 Room A110 implies that it and Room A92 were used for some period of years, and it is possible that there was even later construction (discussed as Stage 3 earlier in this chapter). We know, for example, that tiny Feature/Room A111 was added onto Room A110, but there is no way to date its construction more precisely. Similarly, Stage 1 Room A2 was destroyed and additional rooms (A3



and A57) built over it. Room A57, in fact, was built after a sequence of several hearths and/or adobe-mixing basins above the former southwest corner of Room A2. How these features relate temporally to Stage 2 construction is unknown. In any event, the evidence suggests that Stage 1 rooms were built after about A.D. 1110–1120, Stage 2 rooms after about A.D. 1120–1130, and all were used long enough for substantial remodeling. In all, one might estimate that the Terminal Classic rooms at Old Town were used for a minimum of 30–40 years.

## The Issue of Northern Influence in the Mimbres Area

Over the years, Steve Lekson has commented on what he views as important influence of the Anasazi or Ancestral Pueblo on the Mimbres. This includes the previously cited article on Mimbres kivas and architecture reminiscent, in his view, of the unit pueblo on the Colorado Plateau (Lekson 1999a). In his book, *The Chaco Meridian*, Lekson (1999b) also discussed the possibility of Mimbres versions of Chaco greathouses and offered three examples, the Woodrow, TJ, and Baca sites. As Lekson noted, it is difficult to evaluate any of these: the unexcavated TJ ruin, the undocumented excavation of the Woodrow room block, or the poorly reported and now destroyed Baca site. If my assessment of the Mimbres situation is correct, massively constructed Classic architectural units like the Woodrow room block were largely, if not exclusively, a late Classic phenomenon. Some were attached to existing room blocks, whereas others were entirely separate room blocks. Although this by no means negates Lekson's notion of Chacoan-like greathouses in some Mimbres sites, I suggest that the possibility of a perceptible northern influence in the early A.D. 1100s is more complex than simply the presence or absence of greathouses.

Oakes (1999:42) has recently argued that there was substantial immigration into the Mogollon Highlands around Reserve from the Cibola area between A.D. 1000 and 1100. Perhaps the repercussions of this population movement were felt somewhat later in the Mimbres area. On technological and compositional grounds, Hegmon et al. (2000) and Nelson and Hegmon (1999:181) have recently argued that corrugated vessels with polished, smudged interiors from Reorganization phase (A.D. 1100s) sites in the eastern Mimbres area indicate immigration of

people from the Reserve area. Much the same situation occurs with the smudged corrugated pottery from Terminal Classic contexts at Old Town and, apparently, at Swarts as well. This pottery is made of Mimbres valley clays but in Reserve-area style. In addition, the first appearance of formal mealing bins in the same Reorganization phase eastern Mimbres sites is also suggestive of immigration from the Reserve area.

For what it is worth, we should not forget the veneers present on some of the Terminal Classic walls at Old Town. To my knowledge, veneered walls have not been found at other Mimbres sites except for the previously mentioned Swarts 2 site, where it was noted on the interior wall of a relatively large room with double-width walls (Carlson 1965). But, as is well known, core-veneer masonry characterizes early Chacoan greathouses to the north. Is the Old Town veneer a local rendition of a northern masonry style? If so, why only at Old Town and small Swarts 2 site? Unfortunately, we cannot answer either question very satisfactorily.

Similarly, at the Pruitt Ranch ruin, a much pot-hunted and now partially bulldozed large pueblo some 3 miles up the Mimbres River from Old Town, there are very well-made masonry walls built of dressed tabular rhyolite slabs with chinking stones between each course. This is quite different from any other Mimbres masonry of which I am aware, but quite similar to some contemporaneous architecture in the Cibola area. In the end, I think there is evidence for influence, if not actual immigration, from the Cibola area to the north. Mimbres archaeologists have long recognized that there was also considerable interaction with populations in other adjacent areas, especially the Jornada Mogollon at this same time.

In my view, late in the Classic period, the most visible evidence of change was in the construction of the large-room suites, many of them with massively built masonry walls, as well as in the importation of large numbers of pottery vessels made in other areas (e.g., Sierra Blanca-Capatin, El Paso, and Cibola types). Locally made versions of these wares also began to appear, suggesting to Hegmon et al. (2000) that immigrants, not Mimbresños, were making their own pottery with local clays. It was later, during the Black Mountain phase, that construction shifted from masonry to coursed adobe, old pueblos were abandoned, and new ones were built nearby. These and other changes are discussed more fully in the following chapter.

## The Black Mountain Phase Pueblo



It has long been known that there is a concentration of later, Black Mountain phase remains in the southern portion of the Old Town complex (Figure 151). Large rocks, slabs, dark soil that evidently represents melted adobe, and recognizable wall segments are present in an area approximately 100 m north-south and 30 m east-west and reflect Black Mountain phase pueblo architecture. During our project, this portion of the site has been referred to as Area C, and we spent parts of several seasons excavating there. Indeed, although most of our work in Area C was devoted to exploration of the Black Mountain phase surface pueblo architecture, we found a considerable amount of earlier pit house architecture and related features and artifacts as well. It is not surprising that these earlier remains are much better preserved than are the Black Mountain phase remains, and owing to the effects of erosion, all that remains of much of the Black Mountain phase architecture are wall footings. A general overview of our findings has been presented in the book *The Casas Grandes World* (Schaafsma and Riley 1999), but this chapter provides greater detail.

As was noted in Chapter 1, Nels Nelson's 1920 notes and sketch map provide the earliest useful descriptions of this portion of the site (see Figure 10). According to Nelson, "There appear to have been three small houses, the largest, probably having contained several rooms, being at the north end. . . . Not more than one or two bottom courses of the masonry left." We have not been able to relate his small-scale map to ours. We are therefore uncertain about the correspondence between the houses, or room blocks, that Nelson documented and the Black Mountain phase architectural remnants on the north, east, and south sides of the small plaza area. This plaza area was readily recognizable during our investigations by a distinctive growth of wolfberry surrounded

by creosote and mesquite (Figure 152). In general, however, one can see a basic correspondence.

The only room block that is perceptibly mounded is immediately north of the small plaza, and its southern portion is perhaps 0.5 m high and covered with creosote and mesquite. This room block has been disturbed by pothunting, and yet it is clear that at least some of the rooms had significant numbers of large rocks incorporated into their walls. This is presumably the architecture Nelson noted as having no more than one or two remaining bottom courses of masonry.

Our work in Area C involved excavation in nine units, three of them considerably more extensive than the others (Units 14, 16, and 18/25); a basic account of each of these units is presented in Chapter 3. Less substantial excavations were scattered throughout Area C, in and immediately south of the plaza area as well as on the east slope of the ridge. In addition, we made one controlled surface collection on the east slope and, in the 2003 season, conducted an intensive magnetometer survey of 700 m<sup>2</sup> in the central portion of Area C. This survey was done in an effort to determine if additional detail on Black Mountain phase wall locations (and hearths, if still present) could be acquired. Minor testing of anomalies revealed that wall footings have magnetic strengths that differ only very slightly from the background; therefore, it is relatively difficult to define walls and rooms, particularly in an area with a substantial underlying pit house component and numerous potholes.

During our investigations, only two Black Mountain phase rooms were fully excavated, but half of a third large room and parts of others were also excavated. In addition, several wall segments were exposed after removing minimal amounts of looser soil. Ultimately, only a small portion of the Black Mountain phase pueblo at Old Town has been investi-

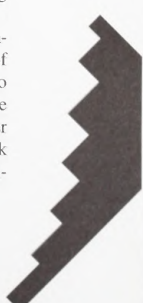






Figure 151. View south to Area C from Area A; the Black Mountain phase ruin is among the creosote in the center of the photograph.

gated, but it is worth noting that even our small sample substantially increases the number of excavated Black Mountain phase rooms in the Mimbres area.

## Unit 14 Rooms

As noted in Chapter 3, Unit 14 excavations exposed two Black Mountain phase rooms. Their walls were in good condition but were generally preserved only to a height of 20–40 cm (Figure 153). In a few places, larger slabs that had been placed vertically in the wall extended somewhat higher. Fortunately, wall fall in some places was sufficiently well preserved that details of construction could be discerned.

Based on wall abutments, it is clear that Room C2 was added to Room C1 (Figure 154). An apparent wall extending west from the southwest corner of Room C1 suggests that there was a room to its southwest, if not also to the south. Wall segments along the alignment of the east and west walls of Rooms C1 and C2, but several meters to the south, further suggest that there was a room adjacent to C1 on its south side. The presence of numerous rocks of the kind used in these walls suggests that there may

well have been adjacent rooms on the east side, and, in fact, there is at least one known wall segment on a north-south alignment east of Rooms C1 and C2 (see Figure 152). No indication of walls was found during very shallow scraping around the northeast and northwest corners of Room C2 (an area at least partially disturbed by pothunting). It does seem unlikely, however, that there were rooms west of C1 and C2 in the area believed to be a plaza, as tests revealed no recognizable architectural remains but did confirm the presence of bedrock at a much shallower depth than the room floors. In sum, there is evidence, but no proof at present, that there were rooms adjacent to C1 and C2 on the east and south.

## Room C1

**Dimensions:** 3.1 by 33.3 m

**Floor area:** 10.2 m<sup>2</sup>

**Portion excavated:** All

**Walls:** Based on the elevation of bedrock immediately outside the west walls of C1 and C2, it is inferred that some bedrock was removed to provide a level location for construction. Wall bases are generally well preserved except for the north side, where



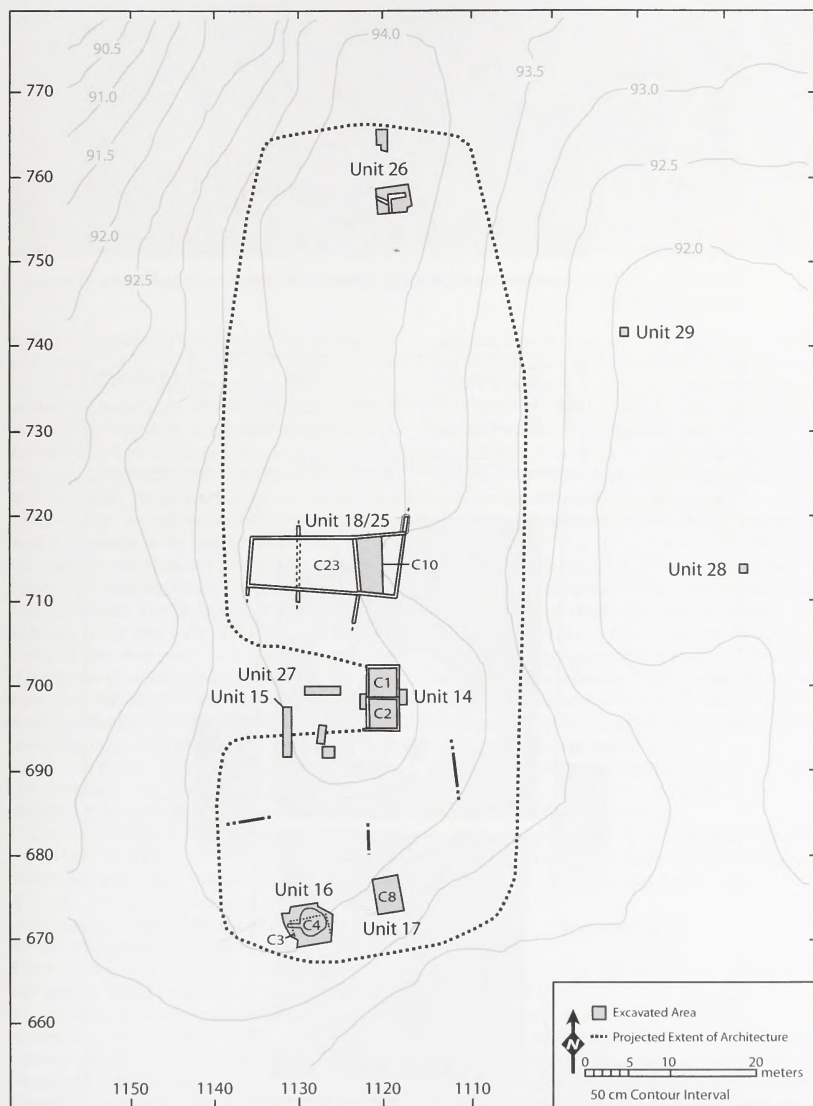


Figure 152. Plan of Area C depicting location of excavated Black Mountain phase rooms and identified wall segments. Shaded area marks maximum potential extent of surface pueblo architecture.



Figure 153. View east over Rooms C1 and C2 at floor level (meter scale and arrow point grid north).

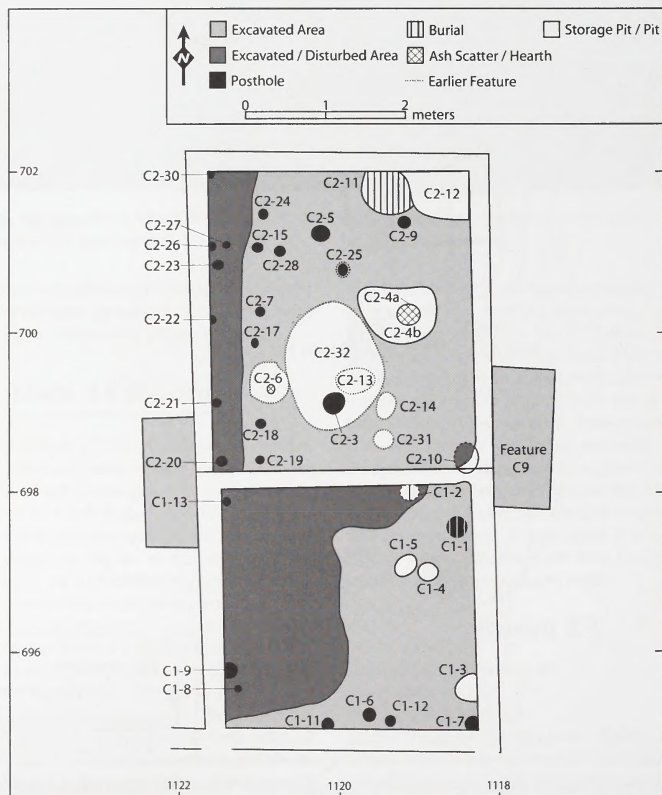


Figure 154. Plan of Unit 14 and Rooms C1 and C2.

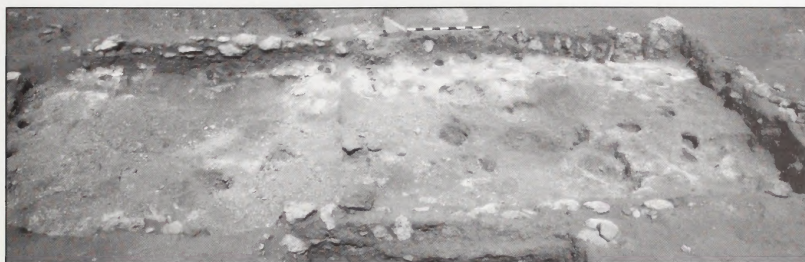


Figure 155. View west over Rooms C1 and C2 after excavation of floor features.

pothunting apparently removed all but the east end of the wall. For the north and south walls, a trench ca. 10 cm deep was dug into bedrock and filled with adobe (incidentally, the adobe in the surface rooms in Area C is very dark, almost black, in contrast to the reddish adobe in Area A). The wall base above this, where preserved, consists of numerous small tuff slabs set mostly horizontally in adobe (Figure 155). Except for the east end, the only remnant of the north wall is the adobe in the footing trench. Because the east and west wall remnants were not dismantled during our excavations, it is not known if they, too, had footing trenches. The evidence from the very limited exposure of the east walls of C1 and C2, however, indicates that they were built in footing trenches dug into the fill of underlying Feature C9. The situation elsewhere along these walls is unknown. Intact wall fall from the east and south walls revealed that there was much rock in the walls to a height of at least 1.2 m (above the floor). Although this type of construction is not quite like the Classic Mimbres masonry observed in Area A, it is not as different as the literature for Black Mountain phase architecture would have us expect.

**Wall openings:** None present in wall remnants, although there is a suggestion of a door in the east wall adjacent to the hearth (see Figure 157).

**Access:** Presumably via a ladder going to the roof

**Floor:** Room C1 had at least one floor and either had another floor or episodes of substantial patching. Because of rodent and pothunter disturbance, we could not confirm either of the two possibilities, although we are more inclined to believe that the room had been refloored.

**Hearth:** None present in portion of room undisturbed by pothunters

**Other floor features:** Several features were present, some of which may actually predate Room C1. For the

most part, these were posthole-like features extending into bedrock, most of them along the south and west walls. These were similar to the more numerous postholes in Room C2 in size and location along walls.

**Burials:** One probable infant interment. Feature C1-1 was a small pit, ca. 30 by 36 cm in bedrock, capped with a distinct, 9-cm-thick plug of hard adobe ca. 22 by 25 cm. Directly under this adobe cap was a plain smudged bowl, on its edge, that had a kill hole in the base (see Chapter 10). The presence of a few elements of infant bone in the fill of this vessel suggests that Feature C1-1 was a burial. A nearby concentration of human infant bone (Feature C1-2) in a disturbed area along the north wall may have come from C1-1. A few skeletal elements representing at least two additional individuals were recovered from the eastern section of Room C1, but no graves could be identified. It is possible that rodents had moved these elements from interments to the east and/or south.

**Destruction and abandonment:** Presumed to have been abandoned and allowed to weather

**Dating:** No chronometric dates

**Comment:** Approximately half of Room C1 was destroyed or extensively disturbed by pothunting, and there was much rodent disturbance as well.

## Room C2

**Dimensions:** 3.85 by 3.50 m

**Floor area:** 13.5 m<sup>2</sup>

**Portion excavated:** All

**Walls:** In its construction, Room C2 is much like C1 except that the lowest rocks (mostly slabs) in the walls were set vertically rather than horizontally (Figure 156; see Figures 152 and 154). Information on footing trenches is available only for the common wall with Room C1 and the east wall (Figure 157). Although not as well preserved as in Room C1, fall



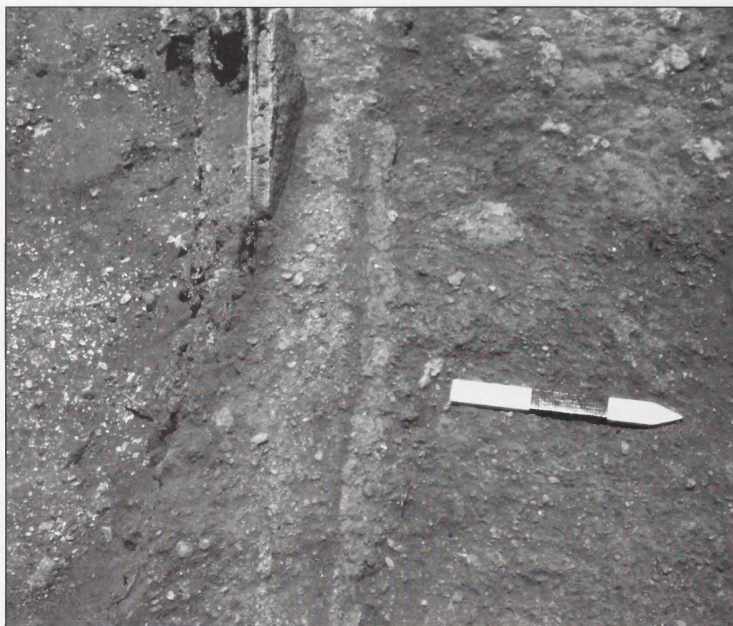


Figure 156. Overhead view of section of Room C2's west wall after removal of loose surface soil; arrow is in room, pointing east.

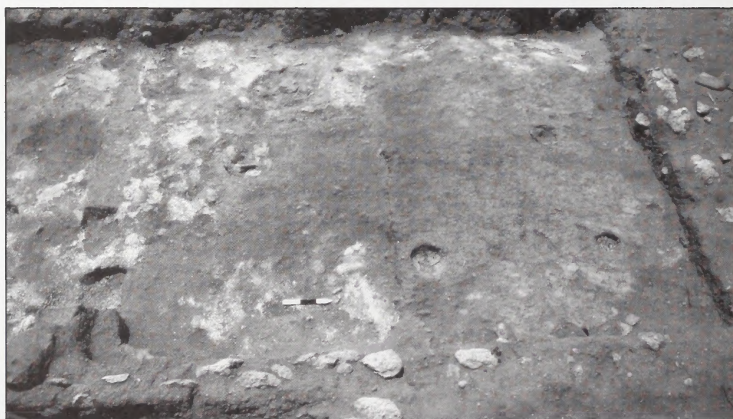


Figure 157. Room C2 after investigation of floor features. At left is adobe-filled footing trench between rooms C1 and C2; footing fill has been removed in one part of trench (arrow).

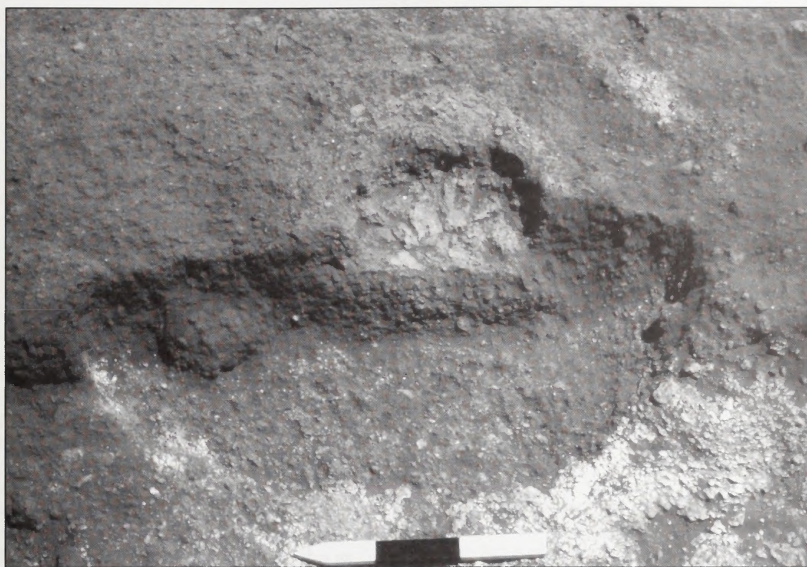


Figure 158. Sectioned hearth in Room C2, within larger basin-shaped pit whose fill contained lump of possible potter's clay (left).

from the north wall revealed that numerous rocks were set vertically in adobe to a height comparable to that inferred for C1.

**Wall openings:** None present in wall remnants

**Access:** Presumably via a ladder going to the roof

**Floor:** Room C2 had two adobe floors, the second directly on top of the first. Almost all features whose stratigraphic position could be determined are related to the upper floor; including the hearth and two main roof-support postholes. In addition, there are numerous small postholes in the disturbed western portion of the room that could not be associated with a specific floor but that clearly relate to C2. Although the pothunter had removed essentially all of the floor adobe in this part of the room, the fact that the floor adobe lay directly on the underlying bedrock indicated an unambiguous relationship between these postholes and Room C2.

**Hearth:** Room C2 has a well-fired, circular hearth ca. 23 cm in diameter in the east central portion (see Figures 153 and 157). This hearth (Feature C2-4A) was built in the adobe fill of a large, shallow basin (C2-4B). It is interesting to note that this fill con-

tained a large lump of what appears to be potter's clay (Figure 158).

**Other floor features:** In addition to the hearth and the two main roof support postholes (with small vertical slabs around the edges at and below floor level), there are two other features that relate to the upper floor (see Figures 153 and 157). Feature C2-10 is a disturbed pit in the southeast corner; it contains burned rocks and its opening had been sealed with adobe. Feature C2-11, along the north wall, is similar to C2-10 but larger. Among the most interesting features found in Room C2 are the small postholes along the west wall (see Figure 153). Several are immediately adjacent to the wall, but there are three distinct pairs ca. 60 cm from the wall. The postholes in each pair are about 50 cm apart, and the pairs are located at a distance of 75–100 cm from each other. Evidently, these reflect the presence of room furniture, such as beds or racks.

**Burials:** One possible child interment. A disturbed pit (C2-12) in the northeast corner contained cranial fragments from a child and may have been associated with the upper floor.



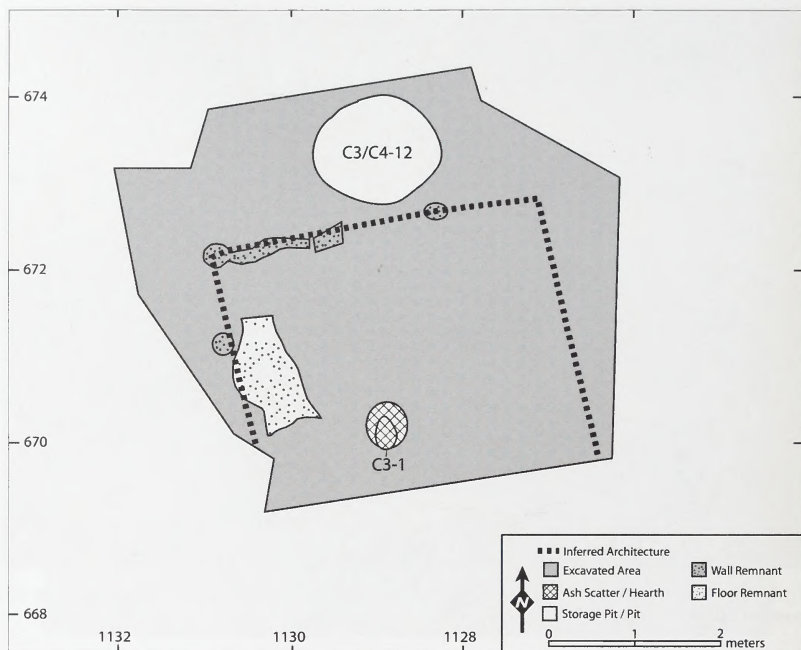


Figure 159. Plan of Unit 16 with remnants of Black Mountain phase Room C3.

**Destruction and abandonment:** What was probably roof adobe lay directly on top of the upper floor. A few charred post remnants in postholes indicate that Room C2 burned, but little in the way of wood or thatch charcoal was found with the roof adobe.

**Dating:** A set of archaeomagnetic cubes from this hearth yielded two intercepts, A.D. 1005–1035 and A.D. 1145–1330, the latter apparently including the actual date.

**Comment:** Room C2 was added to the north side of Room C1. Pothunters had done relatively little damage to Room C2 despite digging along the entire length of its west wall and in the southeast and northeast corners. Apparently, the pothunting extended north beyond the northwest corner, having destroyed the western end of its north wall.

### Unit 16 Rooms

A small pothole and several large rhyolite rocks lying adjacent suggested that surface architecture

was present in this part of Area C, and Unit 16 was excavated to determine the nature of the remains that had been disturbed by relic collectors (see Figure 151). Unit 16 was an irregularly shaped excavation of ca. 18 m<sup>2</sup> (Figure 159). Excavation in the area was decidedly frustrating because the extent of pothunter disturbance was far greater than indicated by the surface evidence. Nonetheless, we were able to determine that at least one almost totally destroyed surface room (C3) overlay a pit structure (Room C4) several centuries older (see Chapter 5). The destruction of these remains is primarily a result of looting, but there may well have been some loss caused by erosion on the south side.

### Room C3

**Dimensions:** The destruction was so thorough that room dimensions cannot be ascertained with any confidence, although it is inferred from the location of the hearth relative to the wall and floor remnants



that the room was at least 3 m north-south and east-west.

**Floor area:** Estimated at 9 m<sup>2</sup> or more

**Portion excavated:** Probably all that was preserved

**Walls:** Obviously, relatively little can be said about construction methods for Room C3. On the north side, it was evidently necessary to support the wall where it traversed the loose, unconsolidated fill of underlying pit structure C4 (see Figure 28). To accomplish this, a footing trench apparently was dug nearly to the bedrock floor of Room C4, rocks were placed therein, and the trench was then filled with adobe. In general, this means of supporting the wall is very similar to that used for the east walls of Rooms C1 and C2 in Unit 14. The presence of numerous tuff slabs and a few rhyolite rocks in the fill, as well as those tossed nearby by the pothunter, suggest that the walls contained a good many rocks, again much like the walls in Rooms C1 and C2. The orientation of the rocks in the wall (vertical or horizontal) is, however, unknown.

**Wall openings:** None present in wall remnants

**Access:** No information

**Floor:** The only preserved section of floor is on the west side of the room, where the floor adobe had been applied directly on top of bedrock. Thickness of this floor adobe is as much as 5 cm, depending on the surface of the underlying bedrock.

**Hearth:** Feature C3-1 is a remnant of the adobe-lined hearth in Room C3. Pothunting has almost completely destroyed this hearth, but enough is still intact that we could determine that it was either circular or oval and basin-shaped.

**Other floor features:** None

**Burials:** Several fragments of human bone were recovered from the disturbed fill of underlying pit structure Room C4, and although these could plausibly relate to Room C3, they could as easily date much earlier.

**Destruction and abandonment:** Because of the extent of erosion and pothunter disturbance, we could recognize no solid evidence pertaining to abandonment or destruction. On the small remnant of intact floor, there was no material that would indicate burning, so we presume that the room was simply abandoned and then slowly deteriorated.

**Dating:** Fortunately, the hearth remnant was large enough to permit the collection of archaeomagnetic dating samples, which yielded a date range of A.D. 1025–1275. However, like the range for Room C2, this date range is too broad to be of much use, as it spans most of the Black Mountain phase.

**Comment:** No evidence of roofing or means of roof support was preserved. The north wall remnants were aligned slightly off of east-west (see Figure 159). No evidence of adjoining rooms was found to the north or east, but, it is quite possible—given the extent of disturbance—that if once present, they have been destroyed or perhaps were not recognized. Because of the extensive disturbance in Unit 16, we were able to collect very few objects that can be directly related to Room C3. For all practical purposes, there is no assemblage that can provide information about context other than tentative association with this surface room.

## Unit 17 Rooms

Unit 17, a minor excavation, was undertaken with the objective of investigating the remains disturbed by a pothunter (see Figure 151). Lying nearby are several probable wall rocks apparently from this pothole, and, just to the south, there is a small rhyolite slab barely exposed at the surface but obviously sitting vertically. These suggest the presence of a structure, but we were able to do little more this season than confirm that a surface room, designated Room C8, is present. The only excavation other than removing some of the pothole fill consisted of minor trenching along the south wall. This revealed that the adobe floor of Room C8 is only 10–15 cm below surface on the south side, but it is probably somewhat deeper upslope on the north side. The south wall remnant, including the vertical rhyolite slab, was similarly only about 15 cm high.

The removal of the loose upper few centimeters of fill where other walls were suspected to be present revealed alignments of rocks that appear to mark the general location of the north, east, and west wall. The best defined of these is the north wall, but with this limited exposure, we were unable to distinguish the wall base from wall fall. The west wall is poorly defined primarily because it has been extensively disturbed by pothunting, but location of the southwest corner allowed us to determine the wall alignment.

## Room C8

**Dimensions:** Based on the limited exposures, the dimensions of Room C8 can be approximated at ca. 3.5–4 m north-south and perhaps 3 m east-west.

**Floor area:** Estimated at 10 m<sup>2</sup> or more

**Portion excavated:** Less than 5 percent

**Walls:** Presumably coursed adobe with numerous tuff cobbles

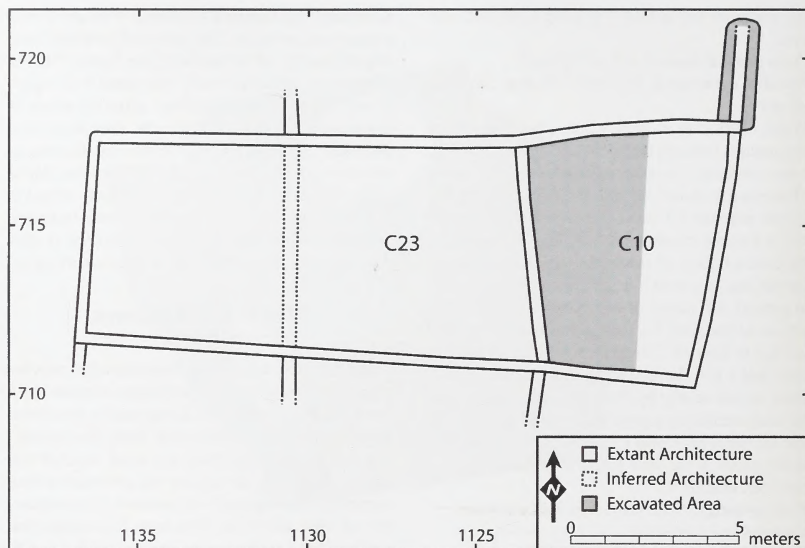


Figure 160. Plan of walls in C10/C23 area.

**Wall openings:** None present in wall remnants

**Access:** No information

**Floor:** Adobe, minimally exposed

**Hearth:** No information

**Other floor features:** No information

**Burials:** No information

**Destruction and abandonment:** No information

**Dating:** No chronometric dates

**Comment:** It is clear, even from our limited subfloor penetration, that this room was built, at least in part, over fill 30 cm or more deep, but neither the context nor age of this fill is known. It seems reasonable to hypothesize, however, that Room C8 was built over a filled pit structure or partly over fill brought in to level the area for construction. Room C8 is considered to be near the south side of the room block. Although no effort was made to determine if there are any adjacent rooms, similar wall alignments nearby suggest that there may be, at least on the north and west sides, if not on the east and south as well. The wall alignments shown in Figure 152 are more nearly like that inferred for nearby Room C3 than the wall alignments of Rooms C1 and C2 or the wall segments south and southeast of Unit 14. Perhaps some of the rooms in the southern portion of Area C represent construction of a different age than those to the north.

## Unit 18/25 Rooms

In Area C, one of our principal objectives was to investigate the relationship between wall segments exposed east of the rubble mound on the north side of the plaza and the architecture represented by the much disturbed rubble mound (see Figure 152). Unfortunately, relatively little work was actually done in the area of mounded rubble, but we did trace some walls and excavated approximately half of a large room (C10) immediately east.

As can be seen in Figure 160, we found that both the north and south walls of Rooms C10/C23 extended west for ca. 17 m without recognized breaks. Because the corners at each end of these walls were bonded (the southeast corner was too poorly preserved to be definitively assessed), we infer that they were built at the same time, enclosing an area roughly 17 m east-west and 4-7 m north-south. The north-south wall between Rooms C10 and C23 abuts on both ends (see Figure 160) but is presumed to have been built as part of the same construction episode. During this very limited effort at tracing walls, no additional segment was found that would have separated Room C23 from a third room to the



Figure 161. View west of Room C10 after removal of loose surface soil in west half. Rubble mound of adjacent rooms is in front of vegetation at top of picture.

west. If one in fact existed, as seems likely, our failure to find it may be attributed to the limited nature of our investigation or the extensive pothunter disturbance in this area, or both.

Abutting walls to the south and north of the C10/C23 complex indicate the presence of additional rooms in this room block. Minimally, there were four, and possibly as many as seven, rooms represented by the walls presently identified in this area. There may even be additional rooms attached on the north that are not detectable from surface evidence. In any event, exclusive of Room C10, the 4–7-room complex differed from other Black Mountain phase architecture in Area C in that it contains a substantially greater amount of rock. Clearly, not all of this surface architecture was coursed adobe, as some was masonry but perhaps mainly in the lower portions.

### Room C10

**Dimensions:** It is ca. 7 m north-south, 4.1 east-west on the south side, and 5.8 m east-west on the north side (Figures 161 and 162)

**Floor area:** Approximately 35 m<sup>2</sup>

**Portion excavated:** Approximately 56 percent

**Walls:** Presumably coursed adobe with numerous tuff cobbles. Because of poor preservation, details of

wall construction are few, but we do know that the wall bases are in footing trenches and that the walls are 30–35 cm thick. Vertical slabs are set in adobe, sometimes parallel to the wall alignment, sometimes perpendicular (Figure 163; see Figure 161). In some places, there are two or three slabs side by side that constitute most of the thickness of the wall. The presence of generally small rocks in the fill above the possible floor suggests that they were incorporated into the walls for much of their height and may have served to anchor one course of adobe to courses above and below. Overall, the rocks in the C10 walls are decidedly smaller than the slabs used in the walls of Rooms C1 and C2 that were excavated in 1993.

**Wall openings:** None present in wall remnants

**Access:** No information

**Floor:** No floor could confidently be identified, although we did recognize a slightly more compact surface that was probably somewhat lower than the actual floor.

**Hearth:** None in excavated portion

**Other floor features:** Three possible postholes probably relate to this room, and there is a possibly associated sealed pit (see Figure 162).

**Burials:** No information

**Destruction and abandonment:** No information

**Dating:** No chronometric dates



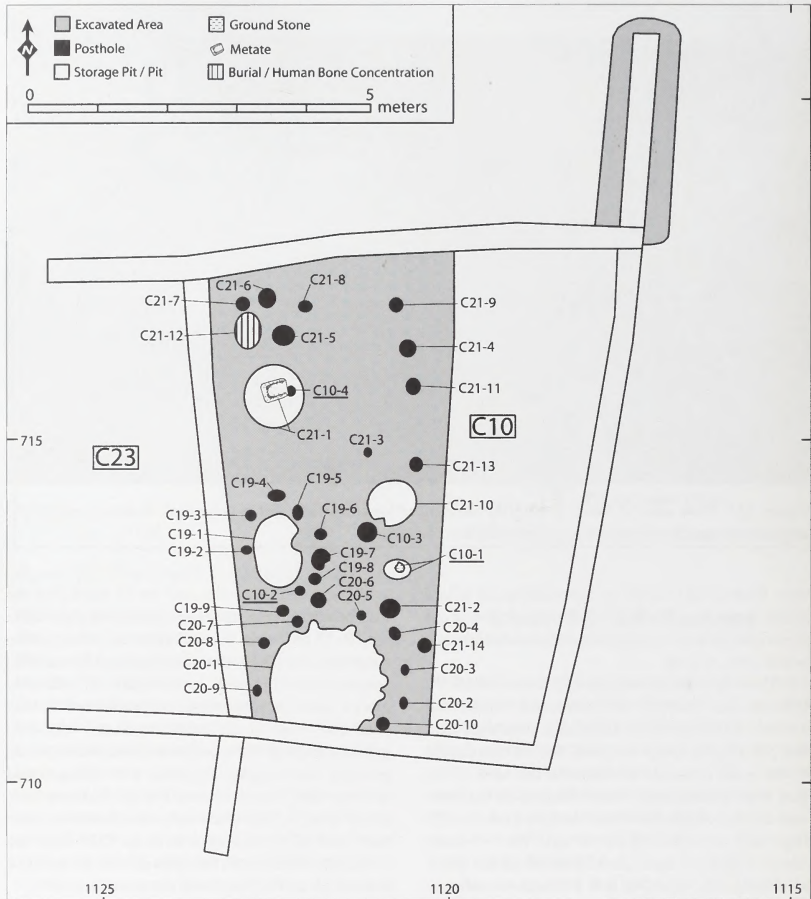


Figure 162. Plan of features in and beneath the floor of Room C10.

**Comment:** Room C10 was first identified in 1993 by its northeast corner exposed in a pothole. Clearing the walls revealed that it was quite large and asymmetrical. Given the poor preservation and our limited time frame, we elected to excavate only the western portion, anticipating that there would be earlier remains below that would require additional time to investigate. The east wall of C10 abuts the north wall, but the southeast corner is too poorly preserved to determine if it was bonded or abutted.

The west wall clearly abuts both the north and south walls, suggesting that Room C10 and adjacent Room C23 were built at the same time.

## Unit 26 Rooms

Located in the northern portion of Area C, Unit 26 consists of two separate excavations (see Figure 152) each placed to investigate possible masonry walls.



Figure 163. Remnant wall base in the southwest corner of Room C10.

One proved not to be a wall, but the other seems clearly to have been part of a substantial surface pueblo wall of large, horizontally laid, tuff slabs (see Figures 34 and 152). Unfortunately, most of the surface pueblo architectural remains in Unit 26 are as poorly preserved as those in Unit 25, and there is precious little fill above floor remnants. Definition of walls was very difficult and often unsuccessful, in part because of prehistoric disturbance. Nonetheless, we exposed small remnants of surface architecture that could represent one to three rooms or extramural work areas.

Room C11 is an extremely poorly preserved surface room; its only definite remnants are short segments of masonry walls (north and west) and a small patch of adjacent floor (see Figures 34 and 152). No east wall could be defined despite the fact that the floor was rising in that direction much as floors typically do near walls. Perhaps the wall had been dismantled prehistorically and the rock used in roasting pits, such as those nearby in Unit 26. If indeed there was an east wall where expected, Room C11 would have been about 2 m east-west, with an unknown north-south dimension. The only other remnant of surface architecture recognized

in this unit was a short segment of wall extending northwest from the west wall of Room C11.

Adjacent to Room C11 are several features that appeared just below the ground surface as distinct concentrations of burned rock, some with quantities of ash intermixed. The largest of these, Feature C12, was excavated and found to be oval, 1.55 m north-south, 0.95 m east-west, and 0.20 m deep (see Figure 35). C16 was the only other feature of this type to be excavated; it is also oval but small (63 by 38 cm) and shallower (7 cm).

## Unit 15

As noted in Chapter 3, Unit 15 consists of three 1-by-2-m excavations laid out north-south to form a 6-m-long trench (see Figure 152). This trench was extended from the apparent plaza southward, into what was believed to be an area of surface rooms with the objective of determining if this was actually a plaza with rooms to the south. A potential east-west wall might have followed the same alignment as the wall extending west from the southwest corner of Room C1, but we could not confidently identify one,

nor did we find any prepared surface recognizable as an adobe floor in the 1993 excavations. Given the presence of apparent wall segments exposed at the surface nearby, we nonetheless consider it to be probable that there is a room in all but the north end of the Unit 15 area.

As noted in Chapter 3, however, in 2003 we conducted two additional excavations in this same area (see Figure 152) to test magnetic anomalies identified during a magnetometer survey. Again, no wall segment could be confidently identified, but we did find what appeared to be an adobe floor with a possible posthole where we would expect it to be if a wall did exist where projected. However, our excavations have clearly been too limited in this area to determine if Black Mountain phase architecture is present.

## Unit 27 and Feature C22

Feature C22 is a shallow, circular, basin-shaped pit lined with small, thin slabs of rhyolite found in Unit 27, a 1-by-4-m excavation in the area tentatively identified as a plaza (see Figures 36 and 152). Its upper edges are barely below ground surface and its base is just above bedrock, which is quite shallow throughout Unit 27. Feature C22 is ca. 1 m in diameter and 8 cm deep. There is no substantial evidence of burning either in the slabs and surrounding fill or in the form of ash or charcoal. The function of this feature is unknown, but it is believed to be a Black Mountain phase feature.

## Area C Overview

The Black Mountain phase remains in Area C have proven to be quite extensive, although their full extent has yet to be undetermined. Evidence of architecture (large rocks, slabs, dark soil apparently representing melted adobe, and recognizable wall segments) is present over an area ca. 100 m north-south and 30 m east-west, although, quite clearly, not all of this area contains remnants of surface rooms. Evidently, the room block containing Rooms C1 and C2 is separate from that containing Rooms C10 and C23 (and others). The extent of either of these room blocks is undetermined, although it is apparent that the room west of C23 is on the western side of that room block. Similarly, the one or two rooms south of C23 appear to border the plaza. Wall segments and the extent of rubble indicate that additional rooms are present north of C23, but how far north this room block extends is unknown.

In addition to the four rooms that have been investigated (C1, C2, C3, and C8), there are several wall segments that have been identified in the southern part of Area C. Based on alignments, one is tempted to speculate that these are part of one large room block bordering the eastern and southern sides of the plaza.

As noted in Creel (1999a:117), the size of the Black Mountain phase rooms at Old Town is comparable to the few other contemporaneous rooms excavated at other sites in the area. Although most of the rooms are 12–26 m<sup>2</sup>, some rooms, including Room C10 at Old Town, are in excess of 35 m<sup>2</sup> in size. Such differences in room size characterize the preceding Mimbres Classic period as well and presumably reflect different uses, perhaps including larger communal/ceremonial rooms.

As was the case at the nearby Walsh site and the Montoya site several miles up the Mimbres River (Raveslout 1979:53), at least some of the Black Mountain phase rooms at Old Town had subfloor burials. One burial in Room C1 had a killed bowl, as did several at Walsh and Montoya. As discussed in length in Creel (1999a), this mortuary behavior is very much like that of the much-better-known Mimbres Classic period, a similarity that is difficult to ignore. We found no cremations in our limited excavations, but given their occasional presence in other Black Mountain phase sites, it is likely that they are present in Old Town's Area C as well.

The ceramic assemblage consists of late El Paso Polychrome, Chupadero Black-on-white, Playas Red Incised (and other varieties), smudged corrugated, and minor quantities of other types, including Tucson Polychrome, Ramos Polychrome, and St. Johns Polychrome. The arrow points believed to have been made during the Black Mountain phase are the basally notched Hinton points (Dockall 1991; Taliaferro 2004a), although earlier points that evidently were collected elsewhere were used as well.

## Dating

Unfortunately, the only chronometric information from our excavations are the archaeomagnetic dates on intramural hearths. The sample from the hearth in Room C2 yielded a date of A.D. 1145–1330, and the sample from the hearth remnant in Room C3 yielded a date of A.D. 1025–1275 (see Table 5). Presumably, these reflect last use of the hearths and rooms. Construction is impossible to date, but Room C2 had two floors, suggesting use over some period of years. Moreover, Room C2 was added onto Room C1, so



it seems likely that Room C1 was built sometime around A.D. 1200.

In terms of ceramics, there is no evidence that informs on initial construction of Black Mountain phase architecture in Area C. Given the earlier of the two archaeomagnetic dates, it seems probable that construction began at least by A.D. 1200, but how much earlier is unknown. The evidence from Area A suggests that the Classic period Mimbres occupation there continued until the mid-A.D. 1100s, perhaps even later. Given the similarity in mortuary practices, as well as evidence for continuity in ceramic and flaked stone assemblages, it is presumed that there was no break in occupation of the community during the A.D. 1100s. It is not known, however, if there was any overlap in the Area A and C occupations.

The presence of a few sherds of Tucson and Ramos Polychrome suggest that occupation in this part of the site continued into the late A.D. 1200s and perhaps beyond A.D. 1300, but there is no recognized Gila or Tonto Polychrome in the ceramic collection that would provide even stronger evidence for a Cliff phase presence. The nearest known site with a well-defined Cliff phase occupation is some 3 miles upstream, and there is at least one other between that site and the Desert site, the nearest Cliff phase site known at the time of Nelson and LeBlanc's (1986) publication on the Mimbres Foundation excavations at these late sites. The substantial Cliff phase occupation at the Black Mountain is located downstream (Lekson 2002), and it is now clear that the Cliff phase population occupied all parts of the Mimbres valley.



## The Prehistoric Road

One of the unexpected findings during the Old Town Project was the long, linear feature referred to herein as a road. This feature extends northeast and north from Area A for several hundred meters and is in many places quite distinct (Figure 164). With hesitation, this feature is referred to as a road, in part for convenience and in part for lack of a better term. Although the term "road" has connotations that may very well be inappropriate (see Roney 1992; Vivian 1997), I have nonetheless chosen to refer to the Old Town feature as a road largely because of some similarity to the Chacoan roads in the San Juan basin.

Our investigations of the road were relatively modest, largely because much of it is located on private property, but we hoped to acquire enough data to more confidently determine its age. Our efforts toward these ends included archival research, aerial reconnaissance for comparative purposes, a controlled surface collection along the most distant portion on BLM property, and the excavation of three trenches to investigate its exact course and subsurface characteristics.

### Morphology

Where distinct and better preserved, the road at Old Town appears as a 6–7-m-wide corridor bordered by low, gravelly berms (Figure 165). These berms are evidently formed of the material scraped from the roadbed and are now 2 or 3 m wide and mostly 15 cm or less high, presumably having eroded down considerably from their original height. A berm that may have defined the eastern edge in Area A was wider than elsewhere and about 25 cm high.

In places, especially near the Classic period Mimbres architecture in Area A, there is little surface

indication of this feature, although it is visible on some aerial photographs, particularly older ones (Figures 166 and 167). The removal in the 1950s of a fence that once ran along the eastern edge of Area B (see Figures 166 and 167) and on southward allowed pothunters and other visitors to drive onto the site, very possibly leading to much more rapid damage to the berms in the northeast portion of Area A and adjacent Area B. The subsequent construction of the fence around Area A in the 1970s reversed this trend inside but probably exacerbated it outside. Indeed, in the years before the existence of the road was recognized, those involved in the Old Town Project consistently parked in this area and drove over the road. In addition, we drove over it many times even inside Area A, as we used vehicles in overhead photography. Thus, it is quite probable that the berms along the road in Areas A and B were once more distinct and better preserved.

During some parts of the year, the road seems less distinct, but during July, soon after the summer monsoon rains have begun, the road is readily visible because the vegetation changes. In fact, at that time, the road becomes noticeably greener because of the growth of low forbs. By and large, however, the vegetation tends to be lighter in the road than outside. In the southwestern portion of Area B, the western berm of the road is also marked by a distinct line of ephedra and mesquite bushes.

### Course and Length

As shown in Figures 164, 166, and 167, this road runs from the east side of the Classic period Mimbres pueblo northeast through Area B toward the crest of the hill. Before reaching the flat crest, however, the road curves north and descends into the rocky upper





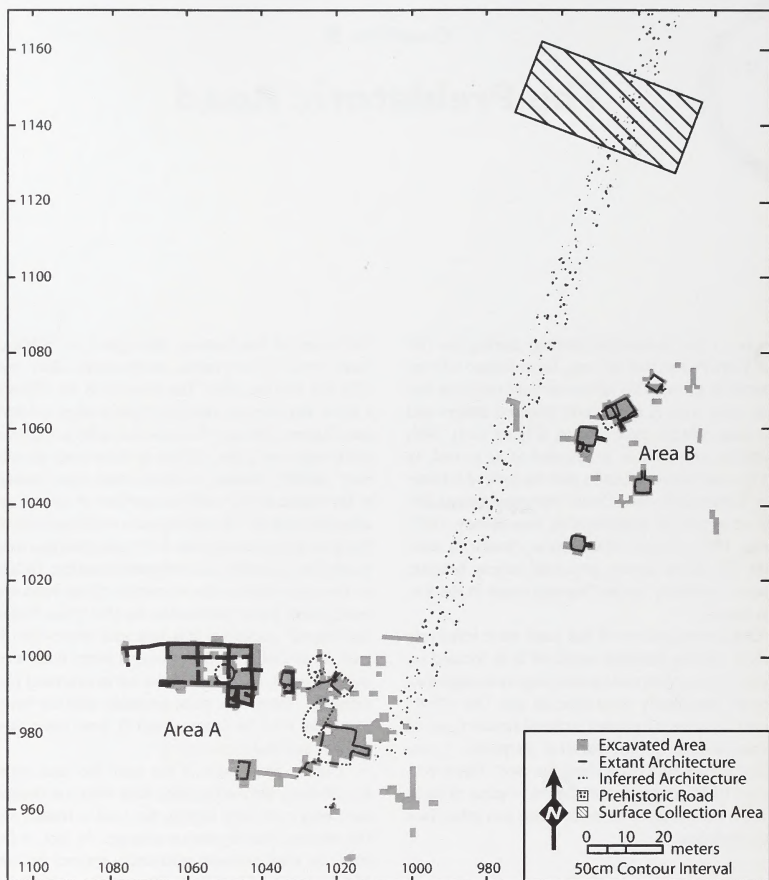


Figure 164. Map of the northern portion of Old Town and the prehistoric road.

reaches of a drainage. It is curious that the feature takes this course rather than shifting very slightly east to the flat crest of the hill, as one would expect for a road used by wheeled vehicles and/or draft animals. The road ascends the opposite side of the drainage, where it gains the crest briefly. However, instead of continuing along the crest of the ridge, it trends in a straight line along the east side until it again intersects the ridge crest. Beyond that point, the road drops off the steeper north side of the ridge, crossing two ledges

of bedrock and ultimately disappearing into the eroded alluvial deposits of another drainage (Figure 168).

The important point is that this feature does not follow what would seem to be a reasonable course for a road used by wheeled vehicles, especially because following such a course would require only very slight deviations. It seems highly improbable that this road was used by nineteenth-century inhabitants of Mowry City to travel to and from the prehistoric pueblo or to points further south.



Figure 165. Transverse view across prehistoric road at north edge of Bureau of Land Management property.

## **Possibly Associated Features**

Several concentrations of rock are present along the course of the road north of Area B (see Figure 164) and are tentatively considered to have been associated with the road. Most of these features are on private property and were documented with the permission of the landowners.

### **Concentration 1**

Located on the east side of the road, this concentration is approximately 12 m north-south and 7 m east-west. It consists of rhyolite cobbles and boulders 15–45 cm across. The concentration contains a moderate number of lithic flakes, cores, two metate fragments, and some two dozen pieces of vesicular basalt—some possibly mano fragments. There are also a few sherds (plain, corrugated, and Mimbres Black-on-white, possibly Styles II and/or III).

### **Concentration 2**

Rock Concentration 2 is on the west side of the road immediately adjacent to the berm and about 20 m north of Concentration 1. It is about 2 m north-south and 3 m east-west and consists of several 15–20-cm rhyolite cobbles, none stacked. No artifacts were observed in or adjacent to this feature.

### **Concentration 3**

Located on the gentle slope at the head of the small drainage, this concentration of rocks is on the west

side of the road, also immediately adjacent to the berm. It is circular, about 3 m across, and consists of about a dozen 15–50-cm tuff rocks and a single rhyolite rock 30 cm long and about 10 cm thick located in the center. The tuff rocks are probably debris produced by road clearing and not a deliberately-created concentration. No artifacts were observed in or around this feature. Directly across the road to the east is another rhyolite rock of similar dimensions, but it is not among a concentration of tuff boulders like that on the west side. These reddish rhyolite rocks are not locally available on this landform and were definitely brought to their current locations.

### **Concentration 4**

This small cluster of a half-dozen tuff rocks (10–15 cm) is 2 m off the road on the east side. No artifacts are associated.

### **Concentration 5**

Located about 1 m west of the western berm, this concentration of 10–15-cm tuff cobbles is roughly 3 m across. The rocks are not stacked, and no artifacts were observed in or near the feature.

In addition to these distinct rock concentrations, there is an unusually large rhyolite boulder approximately 2 m east of the road and north of the drainage head. This boulder, of a material that is not available locally, is 80 cm long and 35 cm high. It is surrounded by a scatter of lithics and a few sherds over an area 12 m north-south and 40 m east-west, although most of the artifacts are within a few meters of the rhyolite

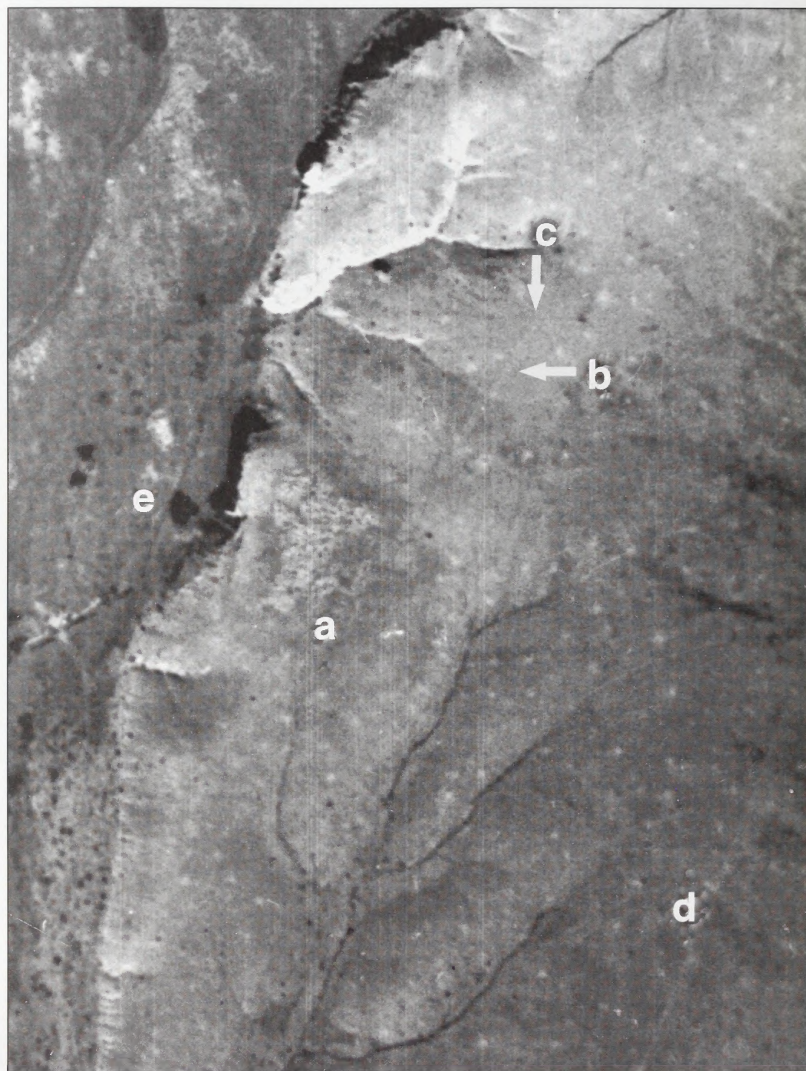


Figure 166. USDA 1937 aerial photograph of the Old Town area: (a) Old Town Area A after nearly 60 years of pothunting; (b) prehistoric road; (c) fence, subsequently removed; (d) county road; (e) historical-period road on Mimbres River floodplain.



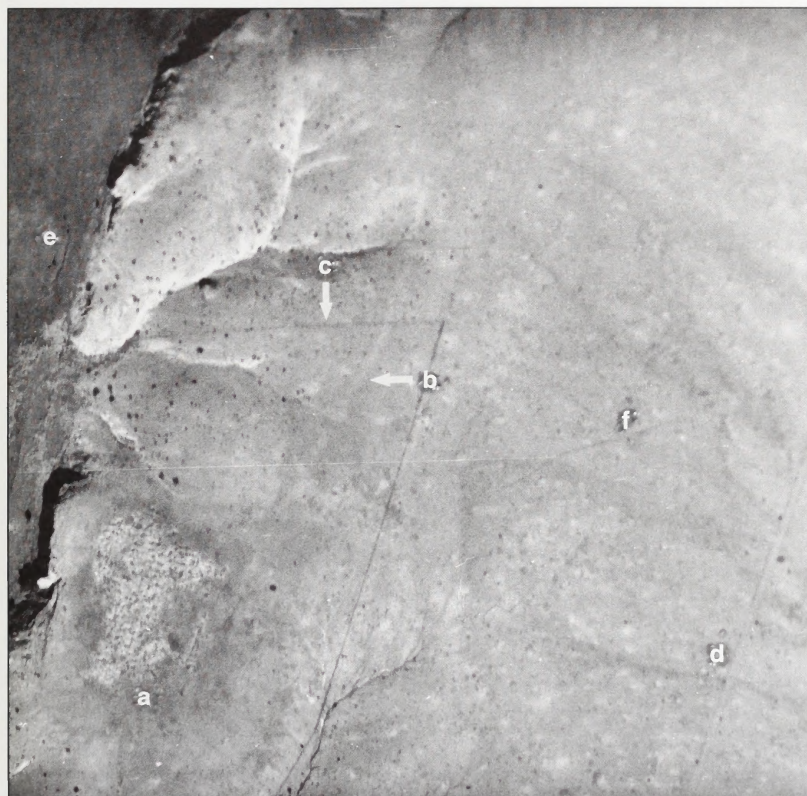


Figure 167. USDA 1951 aerial photograph of the Old Town area: (a) Old Town Area A after nearly 75 years of pothunting; (b) prehistoric road; (c) fence, subsequently removed; (d) county road; (e) historical-period road on Mimbres River floodplain; (f) two-track road into Old Town from county road.



Figure 168. Early morning view of north end of prehistoric road (upper right to lower left).

boulder. The artifacts include some projectile point distal fragments, ground stone fragments, debitage, and small sherds (Mimbres Black-on-white, probably Styles II and/or III). None of these items was collected.

## **Trenches and Surface Collection**

To determine if the road is manifested by significantly different artifact distributions, we made a controlled surface collection in a small area at the northern edge of BLM property, well away from any known architecture and beyond the area of denser artifact concentration (Figure 169; see Figure 164). The collected area was a 20-m-wide transect extending outward from each berm 15 m, for a total length of ca. 40 m. An intensive inspection was made, during which all artifacts were collected and their precise location recorded. In addition, the location and size of larger shrubs was recorded to measure the effect of reduced surface visibility on the number of artifacts observed (see Figure 169).

The surface density of artifacts is 50 percent higher outside the berms, with ca. 0.31 objects per m<sup>2</sup> versus 0.21/m<sup>2</sup> between the berms. A large proportion of the artifacts in the road are just inside the eastern berm, and because the road is on a slight slope in this area, it would appear that the greater number of artifacts near the east side is a result of downslope movement, at least in part. If true, the dif-

ference in artifact frequency would have been even greater in the past. Similarly, the amount of ground surface obscured by shrubs is much greater outside the berms, so it is likely the artifact density there is somewhat higher than the unadjusted density value present here.

Overall, the ceramic collection consists of rather small sherds, many of them unpainted brown ware or much eroded painted sherds. Nonetheless, it is possible to identify sherds of the following types: Mimbres Black-on-white, Styles I–III; Three Circle Corrugated; Classic period Mimbres Corrugated; and perhaps Playas Red. If, in fact, any of these sherds relates to the road, they suggest that it may have been in use during much of the Three Circle phase as well as the Classic Mimbres period.

Adjacent to the surface-collection transect, we also excavated a short trench from the center of the road west through the berm and two small control units outside the road, one on each side (together constituting Unit 24; see Figure 169). In the trench, below approximately 7–10 cm of tan silt, a compact, reddish clay some 10 cm thick and lying directly on tuff bedrock was observed. A similar profile was encountered in the two control units, but the compact, clayey deposit was not nearly so red as inside the berms. At this point, we suspect, but cannot be sure, that the top of the compact, reddish clay represents the surface of the road.

In addition to these efforts in Area B, we excavated two narrow trenches in the northeast portion of Area A to ascertain if the road could be detected subsurface in the areas where no surface evidence



Figure 169. Plan of surface-collection area across prehistoric road.



could be discerned (see Figure 164). The trenches were placed so that they transected the alignment visible on aerial photographs, one close to the Classic Mimbres room block (Unit 22), the other, more removed and closer to Area B (Unit 23).

In Unit 22, as noted in Chapter 3, we found a 6-m-wide expanse of relatively smooth bedrock precisely where the aerial photographs show the alignment to be. It has been our experience that very little of the bedrock surface remains undisturbed in Area A, having been extensively dug into by the prehistoric inhabitants. Indeed, this is the case on either side of the smooth expanse, as there are multiple extramural features (adobe-mixing basins, pits, etc.) on the west side in addition to Room A16, a large communal pit structure. Judging from what can be determined from aerial photographs, the orientation of Room A16's east wall parallels the alignment of the road, and its entryway is perpendicular to, and apparently on the edge of, the road. Indeed, the entryway orientation of the three known large communal pit structures in this area changed from earliest (A67) to latest (A16), and only that of A16 was perpendicular to the road. Although by no means conclusive, these facts suggest that the Room A16 and the road may have been contemporaneous. If so, the apparent construction of Room A16 ca. A.D. 874–875 would mean that the road was at least in part contemporaneous.

Like Unit 22, the Unit 23 trench exposed a smooth area of bedrock, but in this unit, the expanse of undisturbed bedrock was larger, extending from the east end of the trench to a probable pit structure (Feature A17; not further investigated) on the west end. Again, the western end of this undisturbed bedrock more or less corresponds to the western side of the road alignment as it appears on aerial photographs. Together, it and the western edge in Unit 22 line up with the west edge of the road, where it is recognizable on the modern surface in Area B. Based on these limited investigations, we believe that the areas of undisturbed bedrock in Units 22 and 23 are at the very least indirect expressions of the road.

## **Comparison with Nearby Early Historical-Period Roads**

An early morning aerial inspection of the area was made to compare this feature with the Butterfield Trail, which crossed the Mimbres River just below Old Town, and with the old military road (post–Civil

War) between Ft. Cummings and Ft. Bayard, which is just to the north and northeast of Old Town. The latter is quite distinct over much of its course, marked by ruts and alignments of mesquite and, in places, by multiple, parallel sets of ruts. On the ground and in aerial photographs, the military road is notably different from the roadlike feature at Old Town.

The Butterfield Trail, on the other hand, is in places very difficult or impossible to recognize either on the ground or on aerial photographs. This is especially true in topographic settings such as that of the roadlike feature at Old Town. Elsewhere, the Butterfield Trail is quite distinct, including the plains east and west of the Mimbres River valley (Figure 170).

The two early historical-period roads have courses selected for the travel of wheeled vehicles, but, in contrast, the road at Old Town has a course that is seemingly inappropriate for wheeled vehicles in places. There is, in fact, no evidence that wheeled vehicles ever traversed this road (i.e., there are no ruts). Neither the Butterfield Trail nor the military road has berms along their edges in contrast to the road at Old Town.

## **Overview**

Overall, the road at Old Town differs in most regards from both of these early historical-period roads, supporting the possibility that it is prehistoric. Its course, particularly its apparent end at the prehistoric site; its width and berms; the presumably associated rock features; and the presence of prehistoric artifacts along, but primarily outside, all suggest a prehistoric age for the road. By contrast, there is no evidence that this feature is a historical-period road.

Of additional relevance is the possibility of a prehistoric road at the Pruitt Ranch site (LA 1117) a few miles up the Mimbres River. There, a pair of berms, more or less parallel to one another, lead into the main plaza from the south. At the north end, these berms are 1 m higher or more and very prominent, but as they come closer together to the south at a drainage, the berms are considerably smaller and lower. It is important to note that at the south end, they are continuous with a road that can be traced a few hundred meters on south. This road is comparable to that at Old Town in morphology, but at least part of it was evidently used in the 1800s (as shown on the 1868 survey plat). However, the historical-period road turned west and skirted the rubble mounds of the Pruitt Ranch ruin. I suspect that horse-drawn wagons



Figure 170. 1994 aerial photo of the Butterfield Trail on the east side of the Mimbres River valley; view is to the southeast.

in the 1800s took advantage of an existing cleared road, particularly where it crossed the side drainage. In short, its course and the nature of the berms suggest a prehistoric age for this road.

If correct, this would be a second example of a prehistoric road in the Mimbres River valley. Whether comparable features existed at the other large Mimbres sites is unknown, but none has been identified at any of the sites that have been extensively excavated. However, it is worth noting that all of the sites previously investigated have been in the middle and upper valley, where the relevant landscape has

been more extensively modified in historical-period times. It may well be that such features were once present but damaged early on to the point that they were no longer recognizable by the 1920s. On the other hand, in some cases, such as NAN Ranch, the historical-period deposition of coarse sediment from small side drainages may have covered and thereby preserved prehistoric roads.

Assuming that the road at Old Town is prehistoric, there is little evidence for a more specific age. The fact that the road appears to end in Area A suggests that it is Three Circle phase and/or Classic Mimbres

in age. Similarly, Room A16's entryway appears to open onto the road and is perpendicular to it, suggesting contemporaneity. Indeed, the changing orientation of the three known great kivas—only the later A16 is perpendicular to and opens onto the road—suggests that the creation of the road dates to the same time as construction of Room A16, ca. A.D. 874–875. The ceramics from the surface collection in northern Area B yielded Mimbres Black-on-white, Styles I–III, and possibly Playas Red types. If the earliest ceramics in this part of the site are associated with the initial use of the road, then the

presence of Mimbres Black-on-white, Styles I and II, ceramics would be consistent with the dating suggested by the road's possible relationship with Room A16. Continued use of the road through the Classic period presumably is reflected by the Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, and Playas sherds in the surface collection along the road. Beyond this speculative assessment of the meager dating evidence, we do no more than conclude that the road is probably prehistoric, possibly having been first used by the late A.D. 800s and continuing to be used into the A.D. 1100s.



## Mortuary Remains

Assessing the human remains and mortuary practices at Old Town has proven to be difficult and frustrating because of the oft-cited, deplorable level of pothunting that has occurred there for well over a century and because of our limited sample. Although pothunting has had an exceedingly damaging effect on the architecture, especially the Classic period pueblo, it has had an even more detrimental effect on the mortuary remains. As it became known quite early that valuable pottery vessels were often interred with the dead, pothunters not only removed objects from graves but generally broke the skeletal remains and indiscriminately scattered them. Repeated digging of the same deposits by later generations of pothunters simply compounded the problem to the point that disappointingly little meaningful information can be derived from the remaining evidence.

This grim assessment notwithstanding, we have been able to gather some rather interesting and useful information on disposal of the dead at Old Town, although we will never have the quantity and quality of mortuary data that exists for Swarts, NAN Ranch, Mattocks, Galaz, Cameron Creek, Treasure Hill, and other large Mimbres sites. What information we do have from Old Town derives in part from some of the early diggers at Old Town and in part from our own excavations. A conservative estimate of the number of graves that have been looted at Old Town is at least 1,000, an estimate based on documentary evidence from pothunters, the number of killed pottery vessels in collections around the country, and the extent of architecture. Clearly, this significant loss of information precludes any meaningful analysis of either mortuary behavior or the physical remains of the Old Town residents themselves. What is lacking in quantity (only a handful of undisturbed interments), however, is in small part compensated by the variety in our data.

The bulk of this chapter contains descriptive information on the mortuary features found during the 1989–2003 excavations, although there is also some information on earlier pothunter findings. Owing to the difficulty or impossibility of determining context, number of individuals, age or gender for most of the human skeletal remains found during our excavations, this chapter does not address all of the data acquired on these remains. However, there is considerable potential for certain kinds of physical analysis because of the excellent preservation of the skeletal remains (other than breakage).

During the 1989–2003 excavations, interments believed to be undisturbed or at least partially intact were assigned both feature and burial numbers, whereas the more numerous cases of small concentrations of human bone were generally assigned only feature numbers. By far, however, the greatest number of skeletal remains was found scattered throughout disturbed fill in the late Classic period pueblo; these were collected and recorded in the same way as artifacts and faunal remains.

### Late Pithouse Period Mortuary Remains

Eight of the interments found during the 1989–2003 excavations are definitely or possibly assignable to the Late Pithouse period. All but one were found in Area A excavation units, one each in Units 1 and 31, two in Unit 32, and at least five in Unit 7. The exception was in the deepest deposit in Unit 3, Area D, below the cliff. The two interments in Units 1 and 31 were infant burials, neither with any definitely associated objects, whereas the interments in Unit 7 were mostly disturbed adult interments. The partial set of skeletal remains found in Unit 3, Zone 6, was also undisturbed, at least by pothunters.

## San Francisco Phase Burials

The earliest interments found during our excavations were both in Room A71, a great kiva probably dating to the San Francisco, or possibly, early Three Circle phase (see Chapter 6). Burial 16 (Feature A71-14) was a child interred below the floor in Room A71. Despite having been extensively disturbed, this burial could clearly be linked with the upper floor of A71 because a remnant of floor adobe extended out over the pit edge. Thus it is evident that this burial was interred during use of Room A71, and, given the location, it seems likely that the child was interred near, perhaps even immediately adjacent to, the center post (believed to be just beyond the edge of our excavations) (see Figure 102).

Because the burial pit was much larger than necessary to accommodate the small child, it seems likely that other objects were interred with the body and removed by the pothunter (who, in turn, left a cigarette package on the bottom of the pit). Fine-screening of the fill produced 40 shell disk beads and 1 quartz crystal along with assorted sherds, lithics, and other items presumably incidentally included in the fill.

No cranial bones or teeth were recovered from that portion of the feature excavated (apparently almost all of it). Whether the cranium was present at the time of interment cannot be determined, but it seems likely that some fragments would have been recovered had they been present, especially because much of the postcranial skeleton was present in the disturbed fill. Thus, at present, it is believed that only the postcranial portion of the child's body was buried in this subfloor grave.

A second burial, No. 17, was also found below the floor of Room A71, but only one end of the grave was encountered in our excavations (see Figure 102). This interment (Feature A71-10) had clearly been disturbed, and only some of the distal phalanges of the feet were present at the edge of the pit. As discussed in Chapter 6, we subsequently found a neatly stacked set of skeletal remains nearby that were essentially complete except for those distal phalanges present in Burial 17. This secondary deposit of bones, designated as Burial 19, was believed to be a prehistoric feature rather than a result of pothunting in part because the bones were neatly stacked in a well-defined pit whose bottom was the floor of the great kiva (see Figure 103). Typically, pothunters have broken and scattered skeletal remains, and we did not elsewhere encounter human skeletal remains

treated by pothunters in quite this way. In addition, our interpretation of the stratigraphy was that Burial 19 was a prehistoric feature, but there was most certainly some pothunter disturbance in this area, so we cannot be certain that Burial 19 was prehistoric.

Regardless, it seems likely that Burials 17 and 19 represent the same individual, an adult male. The only elements present in the small portion of Burial 17 are missing from Burial 19, and their size and general appearance is consistent. Thus, we conclude that Burial 17 was disturbed and most of the bones redeposited nearby. When this happened is not clear. Similarly, we cannot be sure if the individual was originally interred while Room A71 was in use, although my sense is that he was. One shell pendant was found in the fill near the bones in Burial 19 and may have been associated.

As noted by Creel and Anyon (2003:76–77), burials below the floor of Mimbres great kivas are rare and are known from only two sites, Old Town and Galaz. Beneath the floor of Galaz Room 42A, a Three Circle phase great kiva, were two undisturbed interments: one, a child, and the other, a young adult. In neither case was the cranium present. Beneath the floor of Room A71 at Old Town at least one (Burial 16) and a possible second burial (No. 17) were found. Burial 16 may well have been a postcranial interment like those in Room 42A at Galaz. If, on the other hand, Burial 17/19 was a subfloor interment, it would apparently be the only one of the four to have been interred with cranial and postcranial portions.

## Three Circle Phase Interments

In Unit 1, Burial 3 (Feature A5-22) was an infant interred in the postabandonment fill of Room A5, a Three Circle phase pit house. Although they had not been dispersed, the skeletal remains were not articulated, so we believe that this grave was probably disturbed by a pothunter. Given the nature of remodeling of Room A5 (closing of the lateral entryway and subsequent entry via a ceiling hatch), the infant interment seems likely to have occurred in the A.D. 900s, perhaps late in that century.

In Unit 31, Burial 15 was an infant buried in a small pit below the floor of Room A49, a Three Circle phase pit house (Figure 171). The pit had not been floored over, and the interment was not disturbed insofar as could be determined. There were no associated objects.





Figure 171. Burial 15, an infant below the floor in Room A49.

The interments in Unit 7 consisted of at least eight individuals: two fetus/neonate, one infant, one early child, and four late adolescent/adults. Three of the late adolescent/adults were located in what appear to have been partially intersecting burial pits (A10-4, A10-18, and A10-19) immediately adjacent to Room A10, another late adolescent/adult interment (A10-3) in the fill of Room A10, and an infant (Burial 7, Feature A10-8) in what may originally have been a wall posthole. The others are represented by skeletal elements from disturbed fill, primarily in the area of Features A10-4, A10-18, and A10-19. With the possible exception of Burial 7, all were disturbed by pothunters and none can be linked to Room A10 except by proximity. Feature A10-3 clearly postdates occupation of Room A10, as presumably does Burial 7. None can be dated with confidence, but all are believed to be Three Circle phase interments. No objects could be definitively associated with specific individuals, although there were a number of tiny

slate beads in the disturbed fill of the burials recorded as Features A10-4, A10-18, and A10-19. Similarly, two turquoise beads were in the disturbed fill of Feature A10-3 and could have been associated.

The concentration of skeletal remains found in Unit 3 was in undisturbed Zone 6 deposits which were quite wet and sticky because they were at the top of the water table. Owing to this difficulty, excavation of these deposits was terminated, so it is not known if there was a complete skeleton and, thus, a formal burial. The skeletal remains represent a late adolescent/adult of indeterminate gender, and there were no associated objects. As indicated in Table 8 (Chapter 3), the meager collection of ceramics indicates an early Three Circle phase age for Zone 6 but not necessarily for the skeletal remains.

It is entirely likely that additional interments dating to the Late Pithouse period, and perhaps even earlier, were found during our excavations in Area A, Unit 1. As noted in previous chapters, the late or



Terminal Classic architectural remains in Unit I overlay substantial earlier deposits. In the course of their extensive digging in the area, pothunters trenched deep and probably encountered burials predating the Classic period pueblo. For example, we found one pothunter's buried pile of sherds representing three vessels, one a killed Mimbres Black-on-white, Style II, bowl, presumably from a grave. There is, however, no way to link this partial vessel with any skeletal remains or any burial pit.

In addition, there are a few other interments attributable to the Late Pithouse period that were dug prior to our 1989–2003 excavations. John and Mary Alice King (both now deceased) excavated in a number of places in Area A in the 1960s and maintained some documentation of findings. The following information derives from their unpublished notes and other documentation now with their collection at the Deming Luna County Museum and from interview notes in 1989 (Old Town Project notes, Museum of New Mexico). “Under the floor of an old dug-out pit room on north side,” the Kings found a burial that was interred with a killed Mimbres Black-on-white, Style II, bowl (their No. 107, Mimbres Archive [MA] No. 635) (Figure 172a). Their plotting of its location on their 1989 sketch map of the site places it in the general vicinity of our Rooms A93 and A94. Also in the north part of Area A, they found two Mimbres Black-on-white, Style II, bowls (their No. 103 [see Figure 172b] and No. 104 [the latter MA No. 615] [see Figure 172c]) with human skeletal remains. The form for the catalog description filled out for vessel No. 104 provides the following information on context: “Found under floor of a room previously dug. Floor was three ft below ground surface—on north side of plaza. It and bowl No. 103 were burials, but with many broken bones. Seem to have been packed in.”

## Classic Period Mortuary Remains

Of the remains encountered during our excavations, the greatest number by far appear to date to the Classic period, and this is certainly the case for those found by pothunters over the years. We found no undisturbed Classic period interments beneath the floor of any pueblo room, although we did find apparently undisturbed remains in extramural contexts, particularly in Unit 32. These extramural remains, along with information on secondary cremations found in the 1930s by pothunters, provide the most

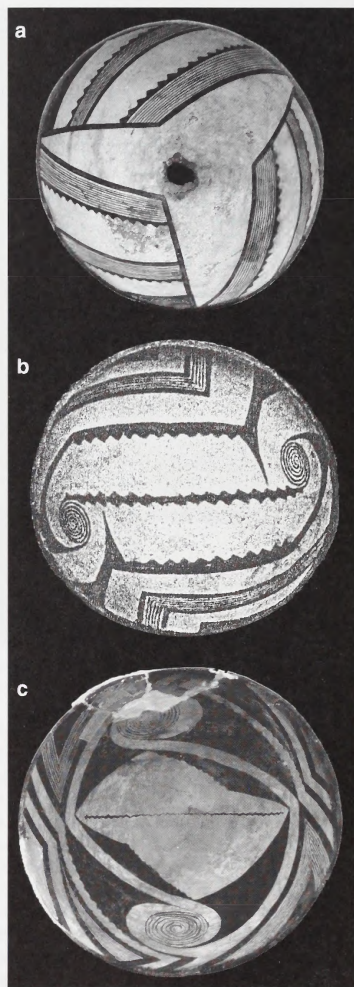


Figure 172. Mimbres Black-on-white, Style II, pottery vessels with Three Circle phase interments excavated by John and Mary Alice King: (a) killed Mimbres Black-on-white, Style II, bowl; (b and c) Mimbres Black-on-white, Style II, bowls (photographs courtesy of the Mimbres Archive).

Table 22. Number of Burials in Excavated Classic Period Rooms

Room	Hearth	Mostly/Fully Excavated	MNI
A1	?	—	7
A2	X	X	10
A4	—	—	1
A6	?	—	5
A7	X	X	22
A9	?	—	4
A11	?	—	4
A110	X	X	5
Total			58

Key: MNI = minimum number of individuals

useful Classic period mortuary information at Old Town. However, even the more general information from our excavations and the findings of pothunters are useful to some extent.

### Intramural Burials

During the 1989–2003 excavations, we found evidence of perhaps 58 burials within the limits of Late or Terminal Classic pueblo rooms. Only in a few instances did we find articulated skeletal remains, but in no case was a skeleton complete. Human skeletal remains were encountered virtually everywhere in Unit 1, as they had been scattered by pothunters. Our recovery of these remains was incomplete because we did not screen all disturbed fill. However, we attempted to determine the minimum number of individuals (MNI) represented per room, an effort that might overestimate because remains from one individual were possibly scattered to more than one room, particularly in corner areas, which pothunters tended to remove completely. Nonetheless, such MNI estimates provide useful comparative data. As noted previously, it is likely that some of these individuals derive from earlier interments. It is possible as well that some individuals derive from the earlier Classic period rooms beneath Room A110 and perhaps elsewhere. Our findings are presented in Table 22.

As can be seen, Rooms A2 and A7 contained the largest number of burials, but this is perhaps because

Rooms A9 and A11 in particular have been only minimally excavated. In addition, much of the upper fill in Room A1 was removed entirely by bulldozing in the 1970s, so its MNI estimate is probably low as well. On the other hand, Room A110 was fully excavated and yielded evidence of very few burials relative to its large size. And it is interesting that we found no definite evidence of burials in any of the long, narrow rooms on the north side of this room block despite considerable excavation in Rooms A92 and A112. It is apparent, thus, that there was considerable variation in the number of graves per room, and apparently none was present in probable storage rooms (rooms with flagstone floors). Rooms with hearths contained a number of burials, consistent with what has been found at other sites.

There are only a few instances of records on pot-hunter collections that have any contextual information. For example, Edwin Hyatt excavated a room in the southwest portion of Area A in the 1930s (notes of on-site interview by Darrell Creel, Old Town Project files, 18 June 1991, Museum of New Mexico). The floor of this room was about 6 feet below surface, and the bottoms of the 25 subfloor burials he found were about 8 feet deep. Hyatt indicated that each burial had an associated pottery vessel, but these were later destroyed by a house fire. Hyatt did not recall having seen a hearth, but it is likely that he dug only along the walls and may not have encountered one if it were present, which seems probable.

Many other individuals have dug at Old Town over the years, but few documented their collections. For the most part, all we know is that a particular pottery vessel was found at Old Town and that the kill hole indicates that it was from a burial. Rarely do we know more, but the collections of V. F. Tannich, R. B. West, and John and Mary Alice King contain notable exceptions. Where possible, that data is presented here; information about and illustrations of pottery vessels without more specific provenience data will be presented in the second volume of this report.

R. B. West dug quite a bit at Old Town in the late 1920s and early 1930s and found quite a number of whole pottery vessels. Few of these have any meaningful provenience data, but two killed Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, bowls are specifically noted as having been associated with a cremation. According to the MA card for Vessel 5554, this bowl has the following label: "Old Town 9-1927 Mimbres Valley crematory" (Figure 173a). A second vessel is labeled "Old Town, cremation 9-1927" (MA No. 5567) (see Figure 173b). There is no way to know if these were associated with the same cremation or, if separate, whether the word "crematory" indicates a primary cremation.

West also found half of a miniature jar that is recorded in the photographic archives (as part of the documents on the R. B. West collection) at the Arizona State Museum (ASM) as having been found with a cremation at Old Town. This jar, suggestive of Reserve Black-on-white or perhaps Puerco Black-on-white type, was not available for examination. The only known record is the photograph and associated description in the ASM archives (see Figure 173c, original slightly out of focus). It was found in 1930 (the date was not more specifically noted). West also found a killed Wingate Black-on-red bowl (see Figure 173d) and the base of a Playas Red Incised vessel, red-slipped on both inner and outer surfaces (see Figure 173e) in January 1930, as well as several Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, vessels in the period between October and December 1929. There is no indication of where any of these vessels were found at the site, although the Style III vessels suggest Area A. The Wingate, Playas, and miniature Black-on-white jar would all fit into the ceramic suite found during our excavations in the Terminal Classic architecture in northern Area A; thus, I suggest that, at this time, West was digging in or near some of the same rooms we excavated. The Wingate Black-on-red bowl had a kill hole, indicating that it came from a burial, and the Playas vessel base had a hole with smoothed edges in the bottom (interpreted as a possible kill hole on

the accession card at ASM).

Finally, the ASM catalog card for 20347, a corrugated pitcher found by West in June 1930, notes that the vessel "has tiny fragments of human bone inside." There is no more specific information on the bone, but it seems likely that the bone was from a cremation. In the absence of any known photograph of this vessel, there is no way to determine even the general age of the apparent burial.

There is no record of where in the site any of these vessels were found, but, as noted below, V. F. Tannich found a cremation in a room (herein referred to as "Tannich Room" C) in the northern portion of Area A in December, 1930, and specifically noted that R. B. West had found cremations there as well. Based on the dates of excavation, it seems most likely that Tannich dug in the same room where West had found the fragment of the miniature Black-on-white jar; however, this is by no means certain.

As noted in Chapters 1 and 7, V. F. Tannich dug in several places around Area A during the 1960s and found several undisturbed Classic period burials. Fortunately, he kept some notes on his findings, and it is possible to determine that he dug in seven, and perhaps more, Classic period rooms. None of the rooms can be identified, although in at least some cases, their general location is indicated. The primary documentation consists of typed inventories of objects, which were each assigned a number, and varying comments. For the most part, the information consists of age and/or sex, context, and associated objects. The burial numbers used here are prefixed by a "T" to distinguish them from burials found during our excavations. Tannich originally sold his collection to Col. Fain W. King of Wycliffe, Kentucky, who in turn sold some of it to the UAM, where much of this collection is curated, and some to the St. Louis Fine Arts Museum. The location of the remainder was not determined during this project. All quotations are from the unpublished collections documents on file at these two institutions and are published here with permission. Unless noted otherwise, quotes are from the documents on file at UAM. There are two typed catalogs of this collection at UAM, both probably by Tannich. The earlier is much shorter than the later one, which has some apparent renumbering of objects and has many more of them.

## Tannich Room A

Based on Tannich's notes, this room was at least 10 feet north-south (east-west dimension not noted), had burned, and had a hearth (not described). At



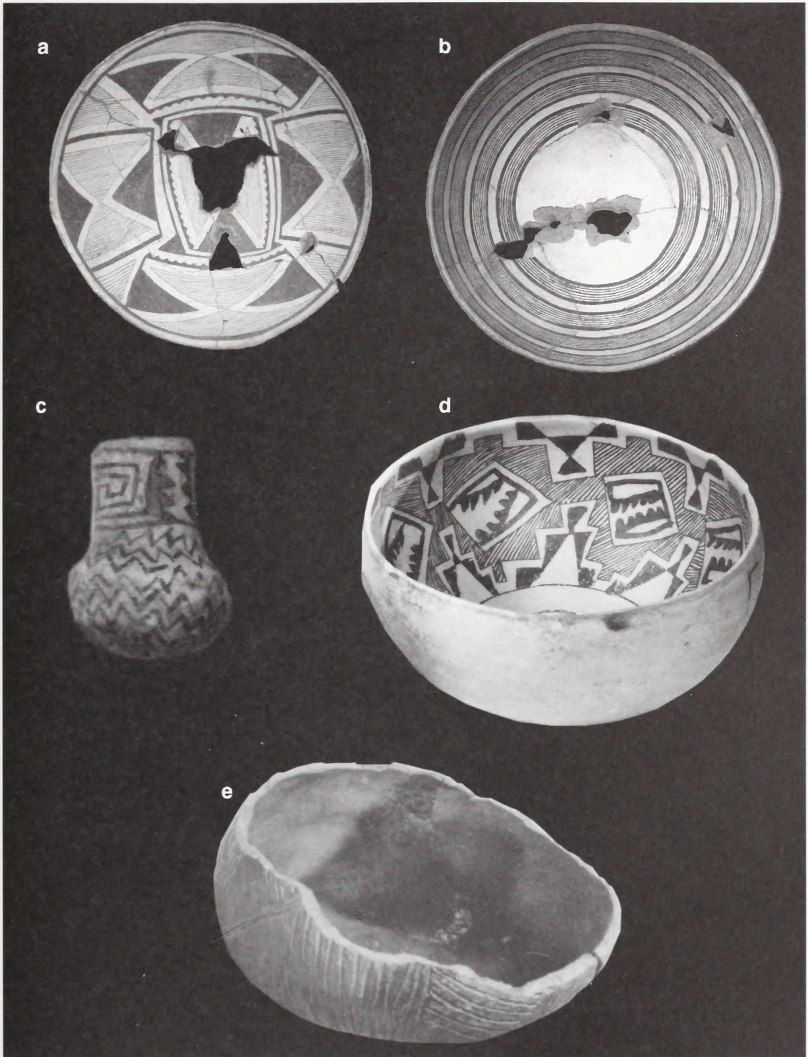


Figure 173. Pottery vessels excavated by R. B. West: (a, b) Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, bowls with cremations (photographs *a* and *b* courtesy of the Mimbres Archive); (c) untyped Black-on-white jar fragment with a cremation; (d) Wingate Black-on-red bowl with burial; (e) Playas Red Incised base with possible kill hole in bottom (photographs *c–e* courtesy of Arizona State Museum, University of Arizona, Helga Tiewes, photographer).

least four (T1–T4) and possibly seven burials were found here by Tannich, one of them containing two individuals.

Burial T1: “[D]ouble burial” below floor; adult male with a vessel whose type and location are unknown (first catalog, UAM, No. 9); adult female with no offering. In the first Tannich catalog, the lengthy entry reads as follows:

Found Oct. 27, 1929 at Old Town, on the bluff. Dug down deeper in an old trench digging. Evidently missed by only a few inches by previous digging. Consisting of double burial: apparently a buck (male) and squaw (female). Skeleton of the buck almost completely gone, and only part of the skull remaining, a few ribs and leg bones. The legs of the buck just over the legs of the squaw; head of the squaw towards the west, and head of the buck to the east. No bowl over the squaw, bones of squaw in better condition. Apparently squaw killed at death of the man and buried together. (??) Depth of the burial about 5 ½ feet, squaw a little lower.... Burial dug down in ‘caleche’ and rock and encased in coffin of flat rock and adobe.

Burial T2: Baby buried in wall, 3½ feet deep, found with Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, bowl (later catalog No. 4, MA No. 4723) (Figure 174a).

Burial T3: Adult 2 feet below Burial T2 found with Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, bowl (later catalog No. 5, MA No. 4631) (see Figure 174b).

Burial T4: The records on this burial are confusing, and it is possible that this was a “double burial” as Tannich documented it. His original catalog entry for Bowl No. 6 reads: “Double burial at a depth of five feet, adjoining No. 5 [vessel in Burial T3 herein], also had an armlet of pendant beads. The other burial had on four kinds of beads, barrel, shell beads, and stone beads. Also had on a bracelet and tiny beads.” His breakdown of these 2,076 beads is as follows: barrel, 293; red, 87; black, 860; small, 732; pendant, 67, miscellaneous, 35; and turquoise, 2. It is not clear whether the bracelet was a *Glycymeris* bracelet, although this seems likely. The associated vessel is a Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, seed jar (Tannich No. 6, MA No. 4724, UAM No. 47-133-4) (see Figure 174c).

Burial T5: Adult, sitting position, 5½ feet deep, found with Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, bowl (No.

2, UAM No. 47-133-1, no MA number) (see Figure 174d).

Burial T6: Adult burial, 4 feet deep. Location of associated vessel undetermined, but vessel (No. 3) described in catalog as “Thunder Bird Bowl.”

Burial T7: St. Louis Fine Arts Museum records describe an adult, flexed, at a depth of 5½ feet; found with Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, bowl (possibly No. 1 in earlier catalog) (see Figure 174e) near the left side of the head.

## Tannich Room B

According to Tannich’s notes, this room was at the “extreme north control [sic] edge of field,” and he dug there November 21, 1930. Under “paved” floor, Tannich found three vessels, at least one of which accompanied a burial. One of the other vessels had a kill hole, so it, too, was probably with a burial.

Burial T8: No data except that it contained a Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, bowl with no kill hole (Tannich No. 14, MA No. 4636, UAM No. 47-133-8) (Figure 175a). Other possible burials are indicated by vessels found under floor, but these vessels have not been located (Tannich No. 12–13; no UAM or MA numbers).

Burial T32: Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, bowl (Tannich No. 12, MA No. 4635, UAM No. 47-133-6) (see Figure 175b) with kill hole suggests that it probably accompanied the burial, but no other data were recorded.

## Tannich Room C

This room was in the north end of Area A and was partially dug by Tannich on December 7, 1930. He specifically noted that the room had been partially excavated by Robert West, who also found cremation deposits.

Burial T9: Cremation deposit in Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, bowl (Tannich No. 16, MA No. 4633) (Figure 176a), apparently covered by Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, bowl (Tannich No. 15, MA No. 4632) (see Figure 176b), at a depth of 4½ feet immediately under floor and “in center of the room, near where Mr. West found his cremations.” These vessels and the cremated bone are shown in a photograph taken by Tannich (see Figure 12 top, left).

The Robert West collection, as documented by the Mimbres Foundation, had two Mimbres Black-



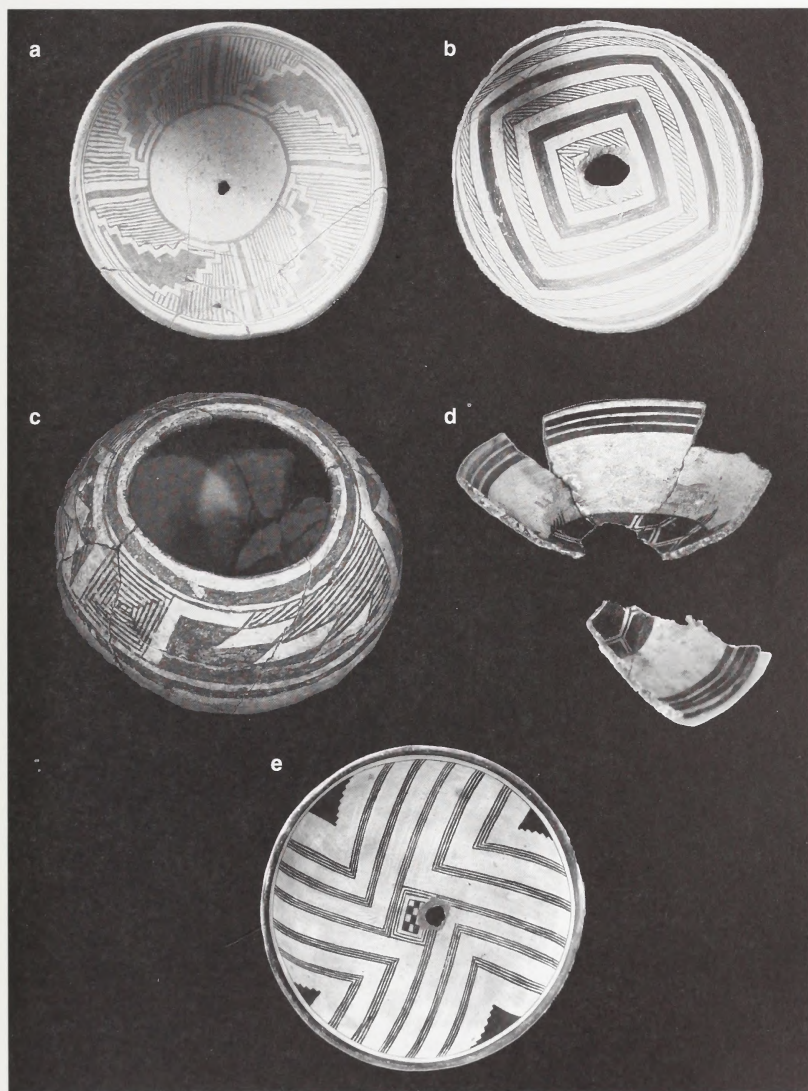


Figure 174. Vessels with burials in Tannich Room A: (a) Burial T2; (b) Burial T3 (photographs *a* and *b* courtesy of the Mimbres Archive); (c) Burial T4; (d) Burial T6 (photographs *c* and *d* courtesy of the University of Arkansas Museum); (e) Burial T7 (photograph courtesy of the Saint Louis Art Museum).





Figure 175. Vessels with burials in Tannich Room B: (a) Burial T8; (b) Burial T32 (photographs courtesy of the Mimbres Archive).

on-white, Style III, bowls, one labeled as “cremation 9-1927” (West No. 54, MA No. 5567) (see Figure 173a), the other labeled “Old Town 9-1927 Mimbres Valley crematory” (West No. 39, MA No. 5554) (see Figure 173b). As noted previously, however, West also found at least one other cremation with an associated miniature Black-on-white jar. There is no known document that records where any of these were found, so it is impossible to associate any to the room excavated by Tannich. Based solely on the date of excavation, one is tempted to think that Tannich’s Room C is most likely the one containing the cremation with the associated Black-on-white miniature jar fragment. Nonetheless, it is also entirely possible that Tannich’s Room C is where West found cremated remains with the Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, vessels some 3 years earlier.

## Tannich Room D

This room was adjacent to Room C and possibly south of it. It was partially excavated on December 21, 1930. Tannich’s records are limited, somewhat confusing, and clearly contain some typographic errors, but he dug one definite burial, probably four others, and possibly an additional two. The four probable burials are inferred solely on the basis of four vessels with kill holes. Two burials are possibly associated with this room because Tannich noted that they were in “room adjoining cremation” and were

found on December 14, 1930, just 1 week after he found the cremation in Tannich Room C and 1 week before he found the other definite/probable burials. However, it is certainly possible that these came from an altogether different room adjacent to the room containing the cremations and not from Room D.

**Burial T10:** No burial specifically mentioned, but vessel with kill hole found 4½ feet deep. Classic period Black-on-white bowl (Tannich No. 21, MA No. 4700) (Figure 177a).

**Burial T11:** No specific data, but a Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, bowl with a kill hole (Tannich No. 22, MA No. 4630) (see Figure 177b) indicates a burial.

**Burial T12:** No specific burial reference, but presence of a Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, naturalistic bowl with a kill hole at a depth of 5 feet (Tannich No. 25, MA No. 4625) (see Figure 177c) indicates a burial.

**Burial T13:** The only information available on this burial is “Half bowl, over burial, 5 feet” (Tannich No. 26 [vessel not at UAM]).

**Burial T14:** Possible burial and Mimbres Black-on-white, Style II, bowl (Tannich No. 23, MA No. 4634) (see Figure 177d) that may or may not have a kill hole. Its depth of 4½ feet suggests that it accompanied a burial.

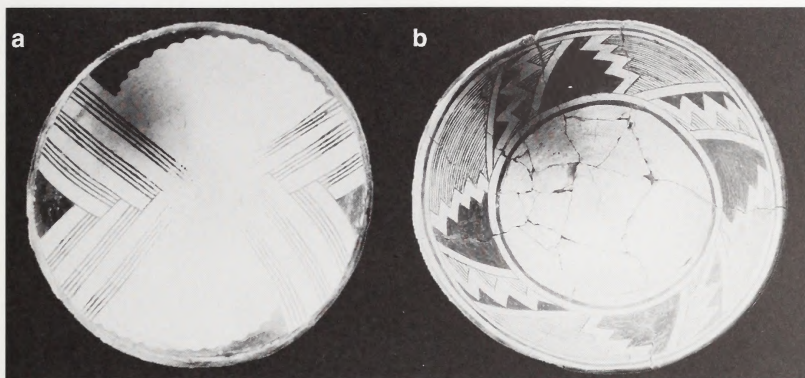


Figure 176. Vessels with burials in Tannich Room C: (a, b) Burial T9 (cremation) (photographs courtesy of the Mimbres Archive).

Burial T36: Tentatively identified on the basis of confusing information. Owing to a typographical error, it cannot be definitely determined which object was originally cataloged as No. 24, but it is probably a Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, bowl with a kill hole (if Tannich No. 24 is UAM No. 47-133-18, MA No. 4638) (see Figure 177e). If correct, the presence of a kill hole indicates a burial.

Burial T15: Infant, 4 feet deep. The object in Tannich's catalog for item No. 20 is not described, nor could it be located.

Burial T16: Adult burial alongside Burial T15, 4 feet deep, Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, bowl with kill hole (Tannich No. 19, MA No. 4560) (see Figure 177f).

## Tannich Room E

On December 28, 1930, Tannich dug in a room evidently in the central portion of the Area A pueblo ("near center of field"). This room had at least two floors, and Tannich found three burials.

Burial T17: Based on the fact that the vessel in UAM's catalog (No. 29) (Figure 178a) is a Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, bowl with a kill hole and came from a depth of 3 feet, a burial is indicated. The vessel is curated at the St. Louis Fine Arts Museum, and their records on this vessel read as follows: "Bowl near center of field under top floor of building. With this bowl in the inside were two carved scorpion earrings. (These should be displayed with bowl)."

Tannich's catalog also notes that these were under the top floor of this room.

Burial T18: Burial under second floor (from top), 6 feet deep. Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, bowl with kill hole (Tannich No. 30, MA No. 4637) (see Figure 178b) along with 646 beads, presumably shell and 1 evidently made of turquoise ("jade" in catalog), and an "arrow-head of tapaz" (probably chalcedony). The beads and point were not located during this study.

## Tannich Room F

The location of this room at the site is not indicated in any of the collection documentation. However, in a brief preface ("Notes on the Mimbres ware with the King collection") to the catalog at UAM, Tannich described "all burials found on the inner edge at Old Town being 'blank'." By this, he meant that there were no objects associated with the skeletal remains. Clearly, Tannich was aware of the extensive digging that had taken place at Old Town, so one could interpret his statement as indicating that the "blank" graves he found had not been previously looted and were in fact interments without preserved associated objects. Regardless, one could infer from his statement and the fact that several of the seven or more burials were "blanks" that this room was somewhere along the eastern side of the pueblo or perhaps near our Unit 1. Tannich excavated in this room on May 26 and June 23, 1935; evidently only the north side of the room was dug, as nothing is mentioned about



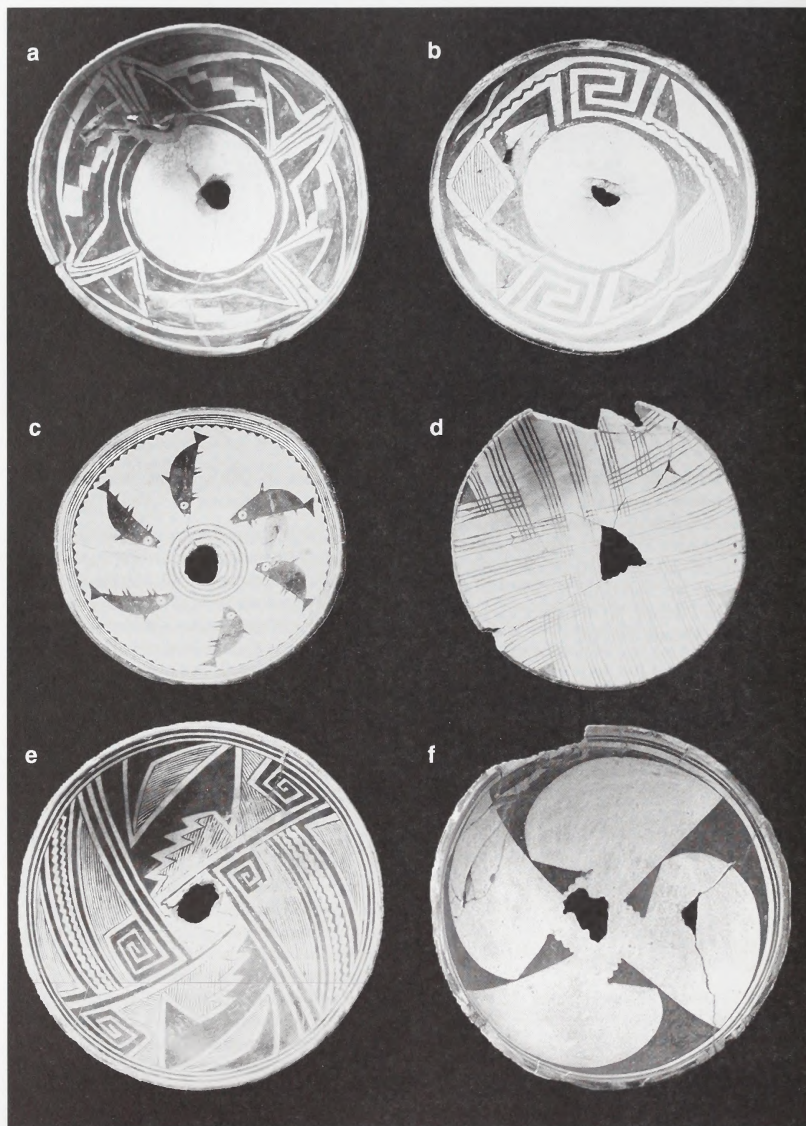


Figure 177. Vessels with burials in Tannich Room D: (a) Burial T10; (b) Burial T11; (c) Burial T12; (d) Burial T13; (e) Burial T35; (f) Burial T16 (photographs courtesy of the Mimbres Archive).



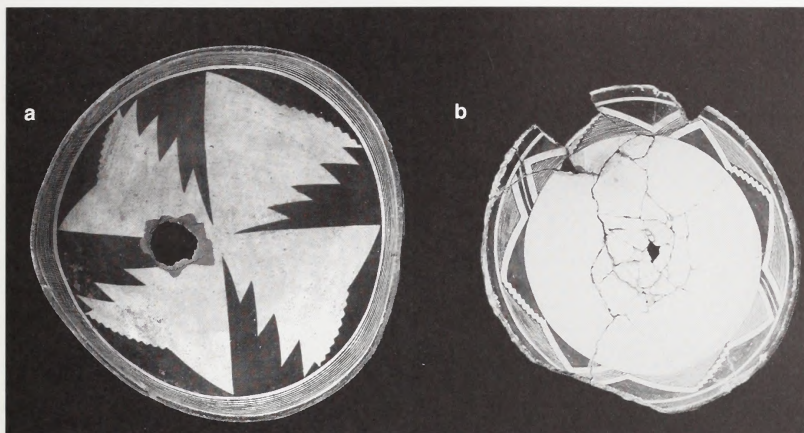


Figure 178. Vessels with burials in Tannich Room E: (a) Burial T17; (b) Burial T18 (photographs courtesy of the Mimbres Archive).

the south side. All burials/vessels were reported as being 4 feet deep. There were at least seven, and possibly eight or more burials in the part of this room dug by Tannich.

**Burial T20:** Adult in northwest corner of room, killed Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, bowl (Tannich No. 192, MA No. 4644, UAM No. 47-133-21) (Figure 179a) over cranium.

**Burial T21:** Child along center of north wall; Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, bowl, not killed (Tannich No. 193, MA No. 4641, UAM No. 47-133-22) (see Figure 179b), over "child." (Maybe just one burial with two vessels? See Burial T22.)

**Burial T22:** Probably but not definitely different burial from T21; "child" alongside Burial T21, center of north wall, accompanied by Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, bowl (fish), killed (Tannich No. 194, MA No. 4639, UAM No. 47-133-23) (see Figure 179c).

**Burial T23:** Adult "alongside" Burial 2/3; Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, crane bowl "over adult" (Tannich No. 195, MA No. 4640, UAM No. 47-133-24) (see Figure 179d), killed.

**Burial T24:** Child in northeast corner of room; Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, bowl, killed, "over child" (Tannich No. 196, MA No. 4706, UAM No. 47-133-25) (see Figure 179e).

**Burial T25:** Adult "toward center of room," evidently relative to Burial 5. Tannich noted "dried up brain in skull." Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, bowl associated. It was not reconstructed, so it is not known whether it was killed (Tannich No. 197, MA No. 4563, UAM No. 47-133-26A) (see Figure 179f).

**Burial T26:** Adult along the east wall, and Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, bowl, killed (Tannich No. 198, MA No. 4564, UAM No. 47-133-27) (Figure 180a).

**Burial T27:** One of "some blanks" with a fragment of seed bowl (type and location of vessel is unknown).

**Burial T28:** Tannich said "some blanks also dug" in this room, one of them being Burial T27, implying at least one other burial, quite possibly more. Thus, one additional burial is inferred.

## Tannich Room G

Tannich dug two burials in this room on June 30, 1935; the room was adjacent to and on the east side of Room F. One of the two burials was in the northwest corner 3½ feet deep; it is assumed that he dug only in this corner.

**Burial T29:** "[Y]oung female," location in room not noted but probably along west wall and possibly in the northwest portion, as that is where Burial T30

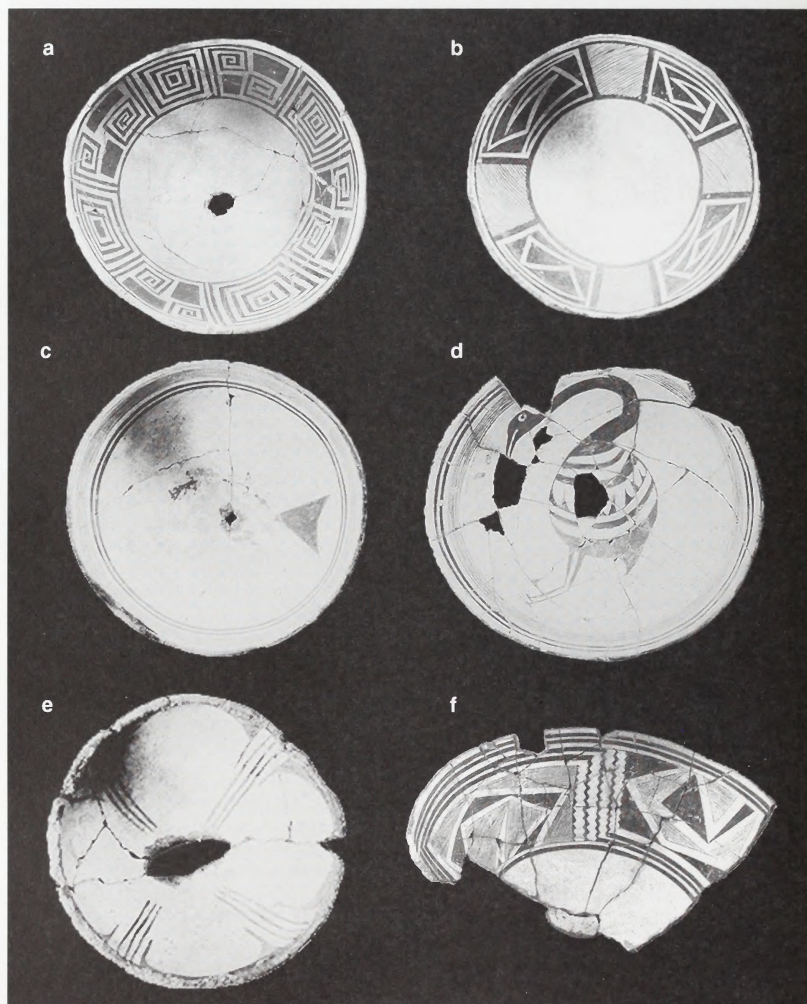


Figure 179. Vessels with burials in Tannich Room F: (a) Burial T20; (b) Burial T21; (c) Burial T22; (d) Burial T23; (e) Burial T24; (f) Burial T25 (photographs courtesy of the Mimbres Archive).

was found. Tannich noted that the burial “had a stone box built from head to above.” A Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, turtle bowl with a kill hole was over the burial (Tannich No. 199, MA No. 4642, UAM No. 47-133-28) (see Figure 180b).

Burial T30: Adult in the northwest corner of this room; a Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, bowl with a kill hole was over the burial (Tannich No. 200, MA No. 4565, UAM No. 47-133-29) (see Figure 180c).

## Other Tannich Burials

Burial T31: Infant, 4 feet deep, in the northwest corner of a room, possibly Room F, but perhaps a separate room on the south side of Room F. It had an unskilled Mimbres Black-on-white, Style II, bowl over the body (Tannich No. 189, MA No. 4643, UAM No. 47-133-20) (see Figure 180d). The Style II vessel, the depth, and the fact that Tannich appears to have dug only Classic period Mimbres pueblo rooms suggests that the room may have been built fairly early in the Classic period.

Burial T33: “Part of jug over burial, 5 ½ feet, date 12/25/30.” Location and vessel type (Tannich No. 27) are unknown.

Burial T34: “Friendship bowl, 6 feet, 12/25/30.” Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, bowl (Tannich No. 28, MA No. 4629, UAM No. 47-133-17) (see Figure 180e) has kill hole and is thus presumed to have been with a burial. The intrasite location of Burials T33 and T34 is unknown. Four days previous, Tannich dug Room D, and 3 days later he dug Room E. These two burials could be from Room D or E or an altogether different room.

Burial T35: “Small jug at Old Town, with a burial at the extreme north end, 4/8/30.” Small, plain pinchpot (Tannich No. 11, UAM No. 47-133-5A) (see Figure 180f).

On the same date, Tannich dug Burial T35 and found a “small friendship bowl” at a depth of 5½ feet. The type and location of this vessel (Tannich No. 10) are unknown. It was possibly with a burial, but no evidence other than depth indicates this. The same date of excavation suggests these two vessels were excavated from the same place at Old Town, at the extreme north end of Area A, as Tannich recorded.

## Extramural Burials

During the course of our excavations in Unit 32, we encountered two extramural interments attributable

to the Classic period. They were found in and under the complex and unusual deposits that overlay the great kivas. One of these, our Burial 18, was clearly a departure from the more typical subfloor interments of the Classic period. To understand its significance, I believe that the distinctive set of buildings, other features, and deposits of which it is part must be understood. I argue that, by volume, the great majority of the deposits in the Unit 22/31/32 area are secondary and deliberately placed in at least two stages. The earlier of the two was a small, low platform that I believe was intimately related to Burial 18. The later deposit enveloped the platform and covered a much larger area, certainly covering all three of the known great kivas and basically extending to the edge of the prehistoric road.

## The Platform Deposits and Related Features

As noted in earlier chapters, in the western part of Unit 32 there were substantial deposits of Three Circle phase debris in and above pit structures A59 and A86, neither of which was excavated to any extent. Deposition of a low mound of distinctive fill (Feature A99) evidently initiated the construction of a low platform, which, to my knowledge, represents a very deliberate construction of a sort not previously reported for the Mimbres area.

## Features A89 and A99

Feature A89 is a shallow, oval pit ca. 1.7 m north-south, 2.2 m east-west, and ca. 34 cm deep that has been only partially excavated (east portion) (Figures 181 and 182). Quite uncharacteristically, its fill is nearly sterile of cultural material other than numerous small lumps of wood charcoal. It is overlain by Feature A99 (see Figures 44 and 182), a low, oval, dome-shaped deposit ca. 3 m north-south, 2 m east-west, and a maximum of 25 cm high. This deposit of dark gray, gravelly, clayey silt is similar to the fill in Feature A89 and also contains a moderate amount of wood charcoal but notably few artifacts. Indeed, the only recognized difference between the two is a slight color variation that may be explained by the fact that the fill in Feature A89 is moist more frequently and for longer periods of time. Although Feature A99 appears to have been modified prehistorically on the east side, this does not seem to have changed its overall shape or dimensions significantly. It overlies, but is not centered directly over, Feature



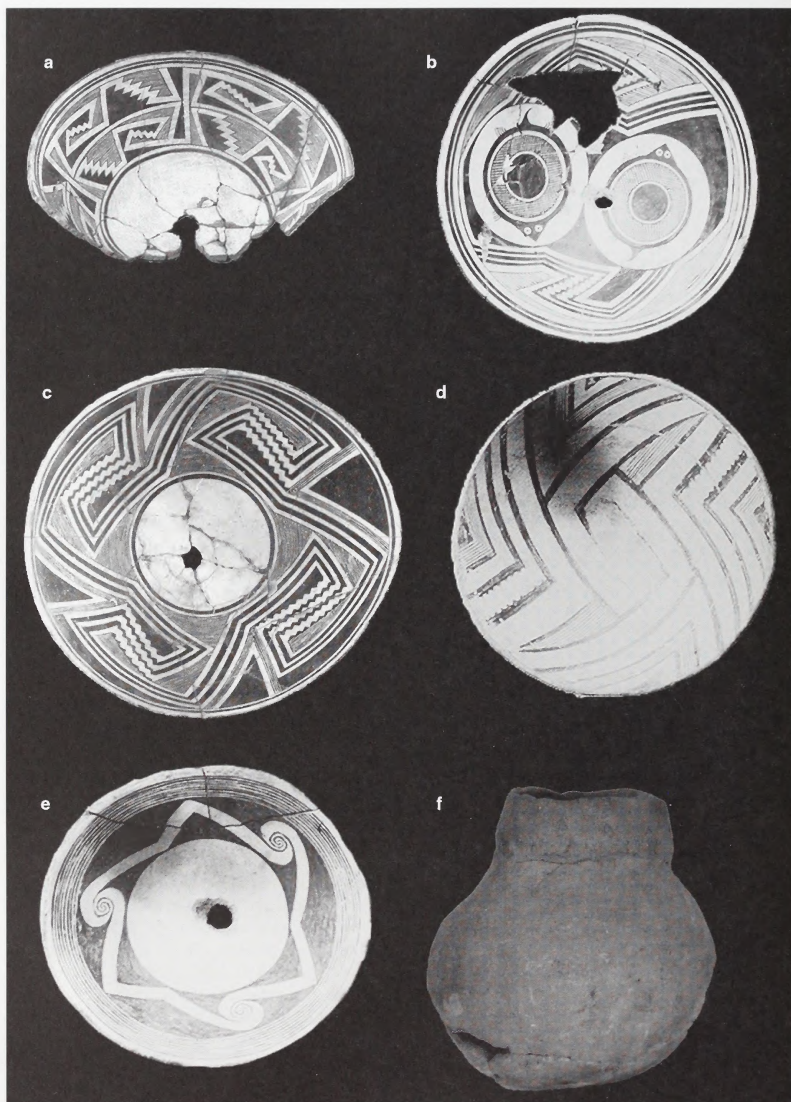


Figure 180. Vessels with burials in Tannich Rooms F and G (*a* is from Room F; *b–f* are from Room G): (*a*) Burial T26; (*b*) Burial T29; (*c*) Burial T30; (*d*) Burial T31; (*e*) Burial T34; (*f*) Burial T35 (photographs courtesy of the Mimbres Archive).

A89. Given this and the similarity of the deposits, we infer that the two are related, although we do not know the function of the pit or the overlying Feature A99 deposit.

## The Platform (Feature A51)

Directly on top of Feature A99 is the Feature A51/58 complex. As indicated in Figure 44, Feature A51 is a flat-topped deposit of very distinctive, highly variable lenses. For the most part, the distinctiveness of what appeared to be individual container-loads of fill made it easy to recognize this feature, particularly where thin, sloping, discontinuous lenses of crushed white bedrock alternate with lenses of adobe or darker but similar-sized lenses of middenlike fill. Feature A51 deposits were placed either directly on bedrock or over Feature A99 (see Figures 44 and 182), apparently immediately after the latter was deposited. This created a platform 60–80 cm high, ca 4.5 m across east-west, and ca. 7 m north-south. It is important to note, in addition, that Feature A51 appears to have been built against, and thus postdates, midden deposits to the west. As a raised surface, therefore, Feature A51 is believed to have extended eastward from the midden deposits and was not an entirely separate platform (see Figure 182 for a preliminary reconstruction of its appearance). On its east side, a perishable rounded object, such as a tree trunk (Feature A51-1), appears to have been set horizontally into the edge of the A51 deposits (Figure 183, top and bottom). This distinctive, curving feature may have given the east side of the platform a steep edge.

The slope and orientation of the lenses in A51 is such that one can easily determine the order in which they were deposited, especially in the better-exposed and undisturbed eastern and southern portions. One of the most interesting findings was that deposition of Feature A51 began on, or perhaps slightly above, the floor of Room A71, a large communal pit structure, or great kiva, that had been destroyed at least 200 years earlier. Clearly, those building the A51 platform dug through wall and roof fall at the very north edge of this great kiva to begin depositing A51 more or less on its floor (Figure 184; see Figure 182). This placement and the fact that there seems to be no structural reason for the deposition of this fill suggests that it was located deliberately to create a physical contact between the platform and an old, destroyed special building. On the north end, a comparable situation apparently occurred. That is, Feature A51 deposits dip down through fallen construction material to near the floor of even older great kiva Room A67, although

our very limited excavations were insufficient to demonstrate actual contact with A67's floor.

Deposition of A51 fill evidently proceeded from the floor of Room A71 and curved slightly eastward and northward to the south edge of Room A67 and then westward and southward to the point of origin. In the process, this created a depression that held a row of large slabs (Feature A58) set vertically in a more homogeneous deposit.

## The Wall: Feature A58

Feature A58 is a north-south row of tuff and rhyolite slabs (including one metate) set vertically as part of the construction of Feature A51 (Figure 185; see Figures 39; 40, bottom; and 42). There are small, shallow potholes in two places that presumably removed a few vertical slabs. Including the adobe, Feature A58 is ca. 50 cm thick and nearly 5 m long. Based solely on the continuous stratigraphy exposed in the deeper excavation on the west side of the north end of A58, we believe that these large slabs were emplaced as the depression created by Feature A51 was filled. The fill strata appear to envelop this row of slabs up to the point where a distinct collar of adobe was apparently placed around them at or just below what was then the surface; this adobe did not extend to the bottoms of the slabs. Thus, there is no evidence that the slabs were placed in a trench dug into Feature A51 deposits. It is also important to note that only two of these slabs were even barely exposed at modern ground surface—that is, the tops of the slabs extended at most 10 cm above the apparent top of Feature A51.

Although we were uncertain in our interpretation of this feature during the excavations, I think it is exactly what it appears to be, a wall footing much like those elsewhere at Old Town. It is important to note that there was no recognizable floor remnant on either side of Feature A58, and floor, if present, would have been readily observable for two reasons: (1) the base of wall adobe was clearly defined a few centimeters below surface on both sides, and (2) undisturbed deposits extended to modern surface in most of the area. Further, it is certain that there were no connecting alignments; therefore, we are forced to conclude that Feature A58 was the footing for a single, substantial wall some 5 m long.

It is interesting to note that there is nothing identifiable as intact wall fall on either side of Feature A58, although a substantial number of rocks that initially seemed to be possible wall fall are present west of

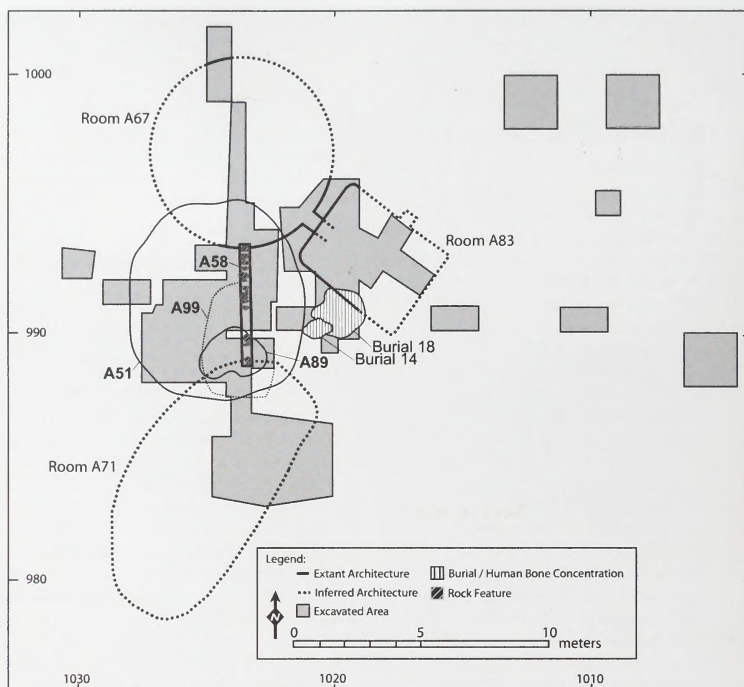


Figure 181. Plan of Unit 32 excavation showing location and extent of Features A51, A58, A89, A99 and Burials 14 and 18 as presently known. The outline of Feature A51 represents the outer edge of the platform at maximum vertical extent.

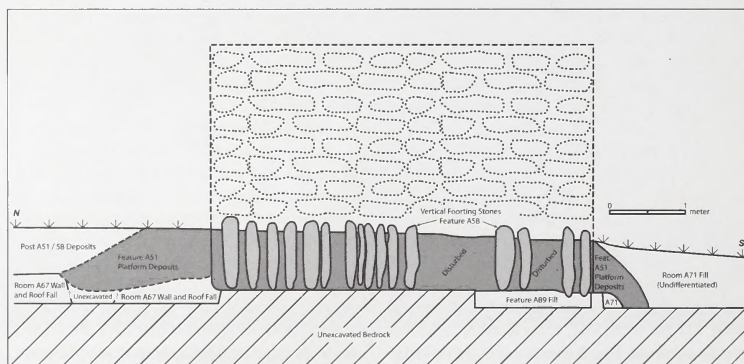


Figure 182. Reconstructed north-south cross section through Features A51/58, 89, and 99.



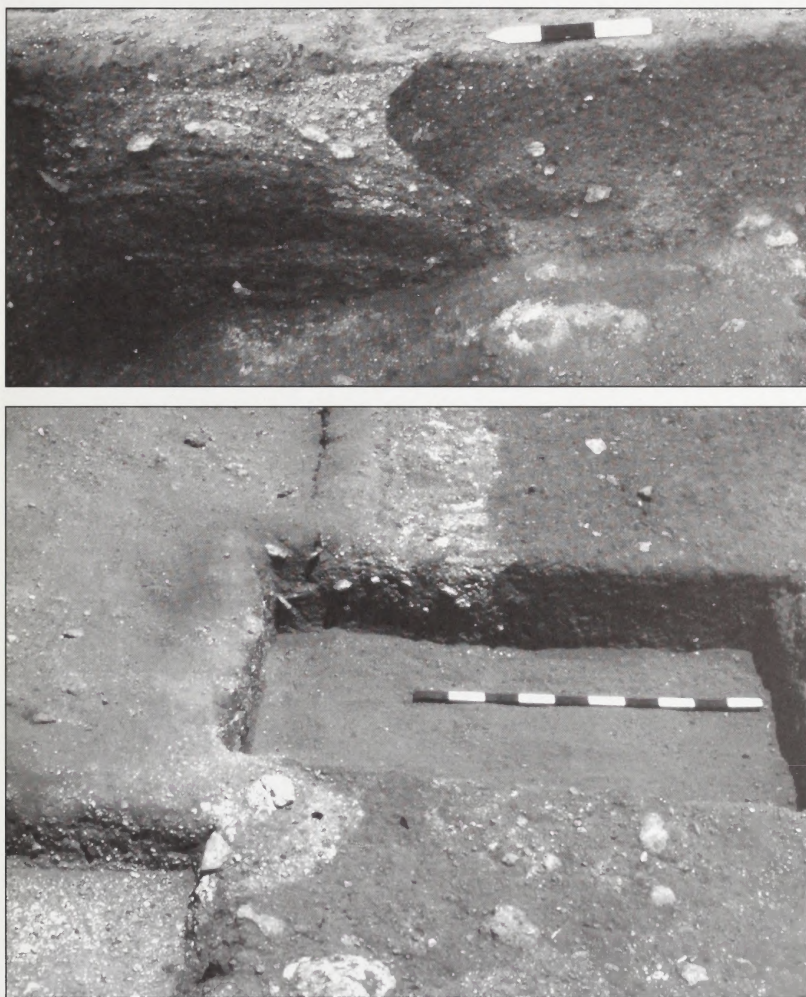


Figure 183. East edge of Feature A51: close-up view showing edge just below modern ground surface (*top*); view showing east and southwest edges of A51 (*bottom*).

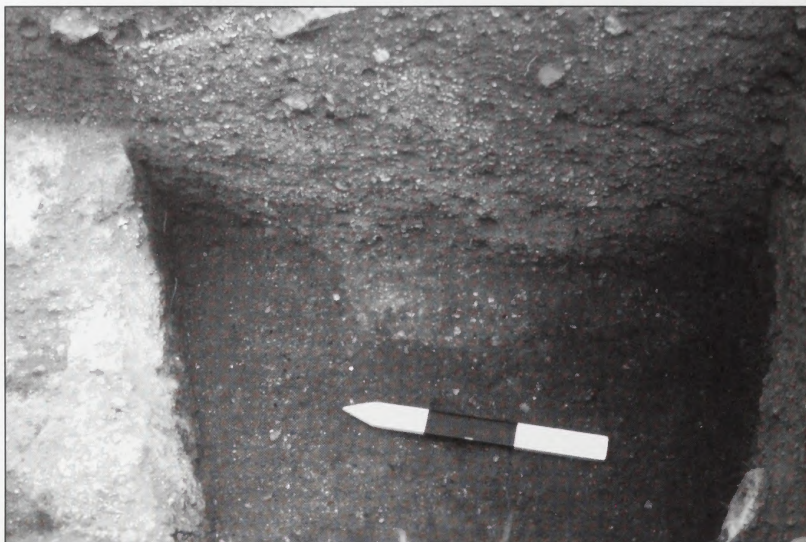


Figure 184. Original deposits comprising Feature A51 extending up from floor of Room A71 whose bedrock north edge is at left. A51 deposits are lighter colored and just above 30-cm scale.



Figure 185. Overhead view of north end of Feature A51 showing the footing stones.





Figure 186. Dog bones between and near the A58 footing stones.

the south end. There was some pothunting west of the north end of Feature A58 that could have disturbed intact wall fall. There is, however, no recognizable adobe among these rocks, and we were unable to ascertain that they fell from atop Feature A58. Thus, despite the lack of evidence for intact fallen wall, we suspect that the numerous large rocks west of A58 may indeed be from a wall on the footing.

In addition, adjacent to and between two slabs in the north end of A58, we found a concentration of bones, Feature A58-1 (Figure 186), consisting of a foreleg and cervical vertebrae from a domestic dog. Evidently, these were deposited after the slabs were in place, presumably prior to the application of the adobe collar around the slabs.

Beyond the basic lateral dimensions, we know nothing of the “wall” inferred to have been atop Feature A58, but the use of a footing implies that it was substantial, perhaps 2 m or so high (see hypothetical reconstruction in Figure 182). As noted, the rocks located near surface to the west may be from this wall; they certainly are consistent in all regards with masonry walls identified in Classic period Mimbres

rooms. The purpose of this apparent wall is unknown, but, as discussed below, its context suggests that “wall” may not be the most appropriate term.

## Feature A52 and Burial 18

Burial 18 was interred in a large pit (Feature A52) immediately east of the A51 platform (Figure 187; see Figures 43 and 44). The circular pit was 1.8 m in diameter and was dug 55 cm into bedrock. Digging this pit involved destroying a portion of the remnant of the southwest wall of kiva Room A83; clearly, at least the lower 30–40 cm of this masonry wall was intact before Feature A52 was dug (see below for discussion of dating and sequence of events). Feature A52 had four semicircular “sockets” on its edge, and each was circular at the bottom. These were 40–50 cm across and ca. 35 cm deep. They appear to have been paired: one was set on the northwest edge and the other, on the southwest edge. In general, there was no recognized difference between the fill in the sockets and that of A52, nor did they contain any artifacts. There was no direct evidence that they



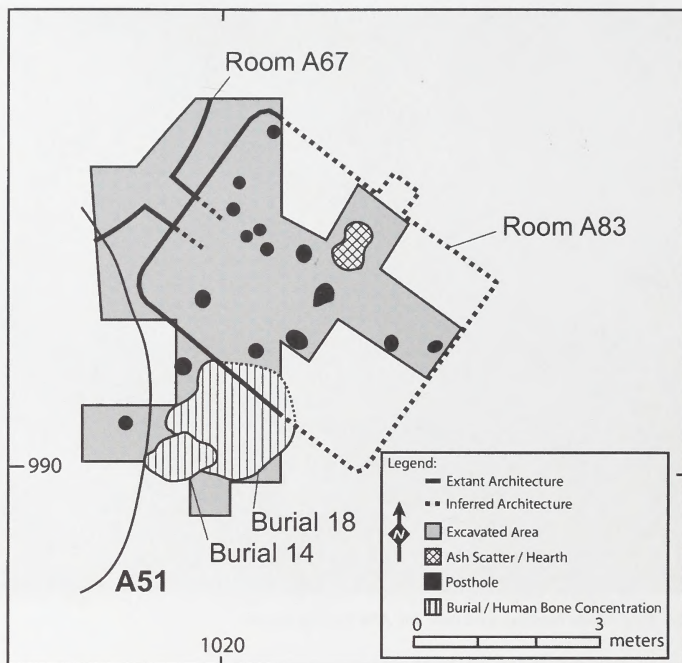


Figure 187. Detail plan of Feature A52 (Burial 18), A40 (Burial 14), and Room A83 (kiva).

held posts supporting a low superstructure, so their function is unknown.

Burial 18, an adult male, was interred in the bottom of the pit in a distinctive, reddish, clayey fill. The only articulated bones were in the arms and hands, and the arm long bones were stained red. The remainder of the skeleton had been broken up and dispersed, parts of it even beyond the edge of the pit into Room A83, a Three Circle phase small kiva. Originally, we believed that this breakage and dispersal took place prehistorically because of the presence of undisturbed deposits above the skeletal remains. These undisturbed deposits were readily and unambiguously distinguishable from pothunted fill above them. However, our excavations in Room A83 in the 2003 season open the possibility that this disturbance resulted from recent pothunter intrusions from the north side that basically would have tunneled into the burial. Ultimately, we cannot be sure when the intrusion occurred, although,

all things considered, it seems admittedly unlikely to have been prehistoric.

On the south side of A52, the original fill deposits fortunately remained undisturbed by the intrusion, and it was possible to see a compact capping deposit that presumably covered the entire pit, including the southernmost "socket." It is important to note that this same deposit, although less compact, extended west beyond Feature A52 and directly overlay the east edge of the A51 platform (see Figure 44). The lack of any wash deposits or any other recognized evidence of exposure between the A51 and A52 deposits suggests that there was no substantial intervening passage of time between their placement. From this, I infer that the interment of Burial 18 and the construction of the A51 platform, with the single "wall" on top, were more or less contemporaneous events.

As noted previously, I originally believed that Burial 18 was desecrated prehistorically and noted

that the Feature A58 “wall” is represented now only by the footing. Because no recognizable fallen remnants could be located and there has been relatively little pothunting in this area, I suggested that the wall itself also may have been destroyed prehistorically. This inference is now debatable, but if correct, and given the nature and proximity of these features, it seems likely that the two acts of destruction were related. Even if the disturbance of Burial 18 was caused by a pothunter and not prehistoric, the significant fact is that an adult male was accorded burial in a special part of the community. Interment was at the base of a platform with a 5-m-long freestanding wall on top, quite possibly built in conjunction with, or immediately preceding interment. Equally important, the platform evidently was specifically located so that, by digging through wall and roof fall, its deposits touched the floors of long-destroyed Great Kivas A67 and A71. Thus, in my view, the individual we have referred to as Burial 18 was buried in an unusually large, deep pit that was probably marked with the prominent platform wall and connected with ancient special buildings.

## Feature A69 and Burial 14

Subsequent to the interment of Burial 18 and the construction of Feature A51, a large volume of fill designated Feature A69 was placed on its east, north, and west sides to create the larger, gently sloping mass visible today. For the most part, Feature A69 consists of more homogeneous deposits than those in A51, as there are comparatively few of the small lenses characteristic of the initial platform. On the north side of Feature A51, there was a series of slope-wash deposits separating it from the overlapping A69 deposits, but these were not so extensive (nor did they appear weathered to any appreciable degree) as to indicate a lengthy break in deposition. Indeed, they could be accounted for by 1 or more days of heavy rain that are typical of the area during the summer.

Throughout Feature A69, discontinuous lenses of distinctive, white, crushed bedrock are present along with middenlike fill, ash lenses, cobbles, and boulders. Artifacts of the sort typically found in midden deposits elsewhere at the site are present frequently throughout A69 fill, but their quantity is not unusual (see, for example, Table 16 for data from in and above kiva Room A83). In Feature A69 fill overlying Great Kiva A67, we encountered several fragmentary human bones that seem to represent a burial disturbed in prehistory as fill material was

being gathered elsewhere. Most of the fill around these bones was screened, and the latest pottery type present was Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III. This suggests, but in no way proves, that the disturbed burial dated to the Classic period; the location of the primary interment is unknown.

Burial 14, an adult male without any associated objects was interred in Feature A69 fill (Figure 188). No burial pit could be recognized even in cross section, and the skeleton was literally just below the modern ground surface. Given these facts, particularly the apparent lack of a burial pit, we believe that Burial 14 was interred as part of the deposition of A69, not afterward. It is interesting to note that none of the bones of the right leg or foot was present, but all other bones in the flexed skeleton were articulated and well preserved. Additional human bone was recovered from pothunted A69 fill about 1 m to the north of Burial 14 and may represent another burial in a comparable stratigraphic position; these remains do not appear to derive from Burial 14 or underlying Burial 18. The fact that Burial 14 (and perhaps another burial) was interred above Burial 18 suggests deliberate placement, although it may instead simply be coincidental.

## Overview of Unit 32 Stratigraphy and Dating

As a result of our excavations, I believe that we have a reasonably good grasp of the complex stratigraphic situation in Unit 32. Most of the deposits in the unit are secondary and result from redeposition of fill acquired elsewhere at the site. Others are primary midden deposits, and some consist of construction debris from various pit structures. As described previously, there are a number of pit structures in this part of the site, some of them apparently domestic, others, large communal buildings. All appear to date to the Three Circle phase or perhaps earlier. These were filled variously with roof and wall material and/or with midden. In addition, Three Circle phase and Classic period midden debris is present between or over some of the pit structures in the western portion of the unit, but the eastern portion appears to have had little, if any, fill on top of bedrock until late in the Classic period.

A major shift in use of this part of the site occurred with the deposition of a low, dome-shaped pile of nearly sterile fill (Feature A99). This was apparently followed immediately by the deposition of Feature A51, producing a flat-topped platform



Figure 188. Burial 14, apparently interred during the deposition of Feature A69. The top of the cranium lay barely beneath the modern ground surface.

that seems to have been deposited against, and flush with, the late and Terminal Classic midden deposits immediately west (see Figures 44 and 182). As part of platform construction, what is believed to have been a single "wall," represented today only by its footing, was built on the platform on a north-south alignment. Close in time, perhaps even at the same time, Burial 18 was interred in a large pit immediately adjacent to the east edge of the platform. At a later time, perhaps soon thereafter, a large volume of fill (Feature A69) was placed around the east and north sides of the platform to create a larger platform that sloped gently east to the prehistoric road. Its north side was much steeper than the east. This addition covered already disturbed Burial 18, and it contained Burial 14 just above Burial 18. As noted previously, it is believed that Burial 14 was interred during the deposition of Feature A69.

As discussed in Chapter 7, because Room A1 overlies thin Terminal Classic midden deposits, it must be Terminal Classic in age (post-A.D. 1130). Similarly, the platform deposits appear to have been placed against existing late and Terminal Classic midden deposits, indicating that the platform must also

be Terminal Classic in age. Thus, it is possible to relate the construction of the platform to the construction of Room A1, part of Stage 1 construction in the Terminal Classic surface pueblo, at least in a general way. This stratigraphic assessment is consistent with the fact that the ceramic content of the platform deposits is similar to that below Room A1 in having small quantities of late forms of Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, and types such as Playas Red. On this basis, it seems likely that the construction of the platform occurred close in time to that of Room A1, both sometime after about A.D. 1130.

Because of the extensive pothunting immediately south of this platform, it is not absolutely clear how the platform related to the mass of fill (referred to as Zone B in that unit) above large communal pit structure Room A16. However, it is clear that the top of the platform in Unit 32 was about the same height as Zone B above Room A16. In every regard, Zone B and Feature A69 deposits are comparable. In terms of ceramics, they are very similar, both containing modest amounts of Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III; Classic period corrugated; and even an occasional



Playas or other Terminal Classic type, in addition to much larger quantities of earlier types.

Thus, despite the lack of a continuous exposure of undisturbed deposits from Unit 16 north through Unit 32, it seems probable that the mass of fill over Room A16 and A51 platform deposits is part of the same, larger mass of fill placed there at the one time. The deposition of this mass of fill effectively covered three great kivas and Burial 18 and simultaneously enveloped the platform, eliminating it as a visible prominence.

## Black Mountain Phase Mortuary Features

Black Mountain phase burials in our sample are few in number, perhaps because of the relatively small amount of excavating we did in Area C. Mortuary features confidently attributable to the Black Mountain phase were found in only two rooms, although skeletal remains found in other excavations may also date to this phase.

In Room C1, we found a small pit (Feature C1-1), ca. 30 by 36 cm in bedrock, capped with a distinct, 9-cm-thick plug of hard adobe. Directly under this adobe cap was a plain smudged bowl, on its edge, that has a kill hole in the base (Figure 189, top and bottom). The presence of a few elements of infant bone in the fill of this vessel suggests that Feature C1-1 was a burial. Presumably, the remainder of the infant skeletal remains have been scattered elsewhere by rodents. A nearby concentration of human infant bone (Feature C1-2) in a disturbed area along the north wall could be from C1-1, but it is perhaps more likely that this concentration represents a separate interment disturbed by a pothunter.

A few skeletal elements representing at least two additional individuals were recovered from the eastern section of Room C1, but we found no evidence that these remains derive from burials in this room. It is possible that rodents moved these elements from interments to the east and/or south, and although they may date to the Black Mountain phase, their age is unknown.

In adjacent Room C2 (see Figure 154), a disturbed pit (C2-12) in the northeast corner of Room C2 contained cranial fragments from a child and may have been a burial associated with the upper floor. There were no associated objects.

In addition, several fragments of human bone were recovered from the disturbed fill of Room C4, an early pit house beneath Black Mountain phase

Room C3. Although these skeletal remains could plausibly be associated with Room C3, they could as easily date much earlier.

## Burial of Unknown Age

Although scattered fragments of human bone were encountered in many excavation units, only one complete burial was found that could not be assigned to a specific phase. This apparently undisturbed interment, Burial 13, was in an extramural area near the northeast corner of Room A16 in Unit 32. Burial 13, an adult male, was interred on his side in a flexed position in a pit dug into bedrock. So far as we could determine, the grave had not been covered with rocks, nor sealed with adobe. No objects were associated.

## Discussion of Old Town Mortuary Data

For much of the history of Mimbres archeology, analyses of mortuary customs has focused on objects interred with the dead, and little attention has been devoted to other kinds of behavioral data. We learned early on that Classic period Mimbres graves were usually intramural and that many, if not most, people were buried with at least one pottery vessel, often killed and inverted over the face. But as Shafer (2003:135–140) has recently pointed out, based on the NAN Ranch excavations and analyses, there is much more variability in Mimbres mortuary behavior than was previously known.

Following largely from analyses of the NAN Ranch data and the Mimbres Foundation excavations at Galaz, Matlocks, and other sites (especially Anyon and LeBlanc 1984; Gilman 1990; Ham 1989; Hill 1997; Ravesloot 1979; Shafer 2003), as well as analyses elsewhere in the Southwest (Mitchell and Brunson-Hadley 2001), dimensions of mortuary variability observable in at least some of the Old Town data include the following:

- Age/gender
- Circumstances of death
- Inhumation vs. cremation
- Primary vs. secondary interment
- Completeness of skeletal remains
- Location of interment
- Type of burial facility and associated features
- Associated objects, both type and quantity

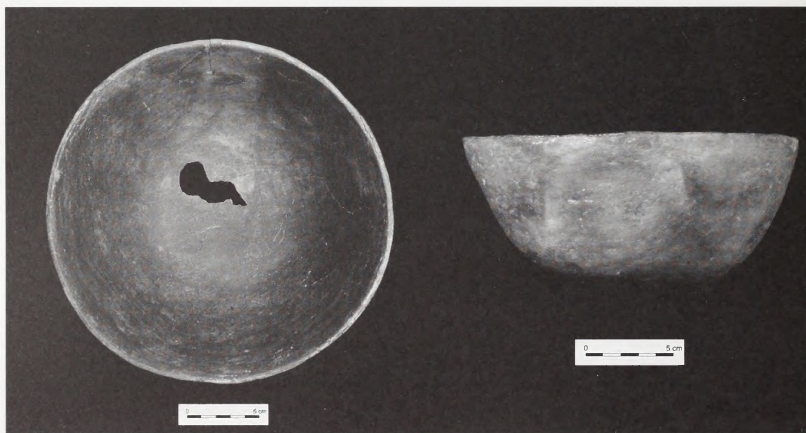


Figure 189. Feature C1-1, a Black Mountain phase infant burial: plain smudged interior bowl after removal of burial pit adobe cap (*top*) and top and side view of vessel (*bottom*).



Unfortunately, only anecdotal comments can be made about most of these dimensions of variability in the Old Town data. In my view, the only meaningful statements regarding mortuary differences as reflected by our Old Town data relate to circumstances of death, whether the body was buried in the flesh or cremated, where the remains were interred, and in what kind of facility.

With precious few possible exceptions, the interments that have been found in Mimbres sites appear to represent individuals who died natural deaths. To my knowledge, there are no convincing cases of violent deaths like those found in contemporaneous sites in the northern Southwest. Several years ago, I suggested that the small number of known Three Circle phase and Classic period cremations, particularly those with projectile points, may represent individuals who died under unnatural circumstances (Creel 1989). This suggestion was in part based on Southwestern ethnographic records of individuals who, for example, died from snakebite, lightning, or homicide, being cremated as opposed to buried in the flesh, as was the case for those who died a natural death. That suggestion was also based on the supposition that only a small percentage of Mimbres interments were cremations. Since then, Harry Shafer's excavations in the plaza at NAN Ranch have revealed that cremation was likely a more commonly used method of disposing of corpses than previously believed and could possibly reflect factors other than circumstances of death (Shafer 2003; Shafer and Judkins 1996).

Decisions on who was to be cremated versus who was to be buried in the flesh evidently were not randomly made by the ancient Mimbrenos. At the NAN Ranch site—perhaps our best source of data—cremations are present almost exclusively in the plaza from which the great kivas were accessed. This is true for both the Three Circle phase and the following Classic period. In the Mimbres area more generally, cremations tend to be present in plaza areas, whereas inhumations tend to be located in domestic areas; mostly inside and beneath the floors of rooms during the Classic period. An exception to this pattern is the presence of individual rooms with multiple secondary cremations in some Mimbres pueblos (as noted for Old Town earlier in this chapter). At NAN, cremations appear to represent all ages and both genders, and they tend to have more associated objects than do contemporaneous inhumations, at least through the Classic period. Cremation, thus, appears to have been the disposal

method for at least some of those individuals whose place of interment was a public or ritually important area within Mimbres communities.

We do not yet know what factors determined that any given individual would be cremated. One could argue, for example, that the available demographic data on cremations, especially at NAN, are consistent with kinship group linkage and not circumstances of death. One could also argue that cremation might even relate to an ethnically distinct kinship group in some Mimbres communities. Most archaeologists working in the Mimbres area probably agree that there was considerable interaction with the Hohokam beginning in the A.D. 800s, and there are even some hints of a Hohokam presence at Old Town (at least one pit structure, palettes, pottery, carved stone bowls/censors, and notched stone slabs, for example) and a few other sites (see Woosley and McIntire 1996). Whether or not Mimbres cremations suggest a Hohokam influence is speculative at this point, but it is perhaps no coincidence that cremations apparently first took place in the Mimbres area around the time that the Hohokam influence becomes apparent in the archaeological record. But who was cremated, and why, remains unknown.

Intramural Classic period cremations are somewhat less satisfactorily addressed than are those from plaza areas. Rooms with numbers of secondary cremations, each in a pottery vessel and covered with at least one additional vessel, are known from Galaz, Mattocks, Perrault, Pruitt Ranch, and Old Town; it is likely that other large communities had such rooms as well. The limited data from Old Town, Pruitt Ranch, and Perrault derive from unsystematic and minimally documented digging in the 1920s and 1930s, whereas those from Galaz and Mattocks are much more useful. In each of the latter two cases, Room D (the Southwest Museum's designation) at Galaz and Room 48 at Mattocks, the rooms with cremations were unusually large and neither had any inhumation burials (Anyon and LeBlanc 1984; Nesbitt 1931). Mattocks Room 48 was a semisubterranean kiva (see Chapter 6 herein), but Galaz Room D was a surface pueblo room. It is unlikely that we will ever know if the rooms at the other three sites were also unusual, but these two suggest further that at least some individuals who were to be interred in special places/rooms in the community were cremated.

Evidently, the location of an individual's interment was related to whether or not their body was cremated. As we have seen, cremations are present disproportionately in plazas and some special rooms,



but at Old Town, interment in that special part of the community where the great kivas are present apparently did not require cremation. Burial 18 was an adult male interred in an unusually large, deep pit that was linked to an adjacent low, earthen platform supporting a 5-m-long freestanding wall. This platform had modest, but what I believe were significant, contacts with the floors of two much older, long-destroyed great kivas (A67 and A71). In my view, the connection of this individual to ancient great kivas via his mortuary facility was quite deliberate and may reflect his important role in the Old Town community, probably during the A.D. 1100s.

Needless to say, I am inclined to think that where one was buried and how the body was treated reflects more about social responsibilities and roles in Mimbres society than does the kind and number of objects buried with the dead. In suggesting this, however, I do not deny the potential significance of variability in associated objects. Indeed, several years ago, Gilman (1990) noted area-wide differences in this regard, and Shafer has noted what seem to be important differences at NAN Ranch. But at least at NAN, these differences seem to some extent subsidiary to differences in intrasite burial location. Shafer has, for example, suggested that the average number of associated objects with Classic period interments in the NAN site's south room block is larger than that in the east room block. He has further suggested that this reflects wealth differences between kinship groups living in the two room blocks. There is little basis for challenging the difference noted by Shafer, even if one might prefer an alternative explanation. It is perhaps worth observing, however, that there was only minimal disturbance in the NAN south room block, whereas the east room block had been subjected to substantial pothunting prior to Shafer's excavations. Whether or not this biases interpretations of apparent differences in associated objects is unknown.

If nothing else, I believe that our understanding of Mimbres mortuary behavior has relied on what is arguably a nonrepresentative sample based largely on excavations targeting Classic period architecture. The recent findings in the plaza excavations at NAN are an important step toward identifying and sampling the full range of variability, and I would argue that our findings at Old Town are a very modest additional step. This is true on two counts, one relating to unusual extramural interments and the other to what seem to have been very rare occasions of interring corpses below the floors of great kivas.

With regard to the important and unique Late Pithouse period interments associated with great kiva Room A71, in my view, these offer interesting information on mortuary behavior that is significant on an intrasite basis as well as for other Mimbres villages well beyond Old Town. The child interment that we designated as Burial 16 had been placed beneath the floor in the central part of Room A71. This grave had clearly been looted, yet virtually all of the skeletal remains were still present in the burial pit. Conspicuously absent was the cranium, and I believe that only the postcranial portion of the child's body was likely interred in this grave. Supporting this inference are two interments beneath the floor of Room 42A—a great kiva at the Galaz site—both of which contained only postcranial skeletal remains and neither disturbed by pothunters. By contrast, Burial 17, an adult male, appears to have been interred intact beneath the floor of Room 71, although it is not certain that interment took place while the building was in use, as seems to have been the case with Burial 16.

As discussed by Creel and Anyon (2003), despite the relatively large number of great kivas that have been excavated in the Mimbres area, interments beneath the floors of great kivas are known from only two sites. Although one could argue for any given case that there is bias in the data, the overwhelming pattern seems clear enough: subfloor burials in Mimbres great kivas are quite rare and are presently known only from Galaz and Old Town. I should also emphasize again that the floor of Room A16 at Old Town has not yet been removed, so we do not know if it, too, had subfloor burials.

It is interesting to note that both of the great kivas with subfloor interments contained at least one individual buried without the cranium. Certainly, there are other instances of Mimbres skeletons without a cranium as well as crania by themselves, but many of these are arguably the result of disturbance during subsequent interments. In any event, one is struck by the rare presence of subfloor burials in Mimbres great kivas ( $n = 4$ ) and by the fact that most of these lack the cranium. In this regard, it is hard to ignore the depiction of decapitation on Mimbres Black-on-white, Style III, bowls (see photos in Brody [2004: Figures 31–33]). There was, however, no physical evidence of decapitation on the bones in our Burial 16, and the skeletons from Galaz were not recovered. Thus, we cannot say one way or another that any of these individuals was decapitated. But if they were, the interment of their postcranial bodies beneath the floor of great kivas seems significant.

For what it is worth, the only two sites in the Mimbres valley with great kivas that have subfloor burials, floor grooves, and *sipapus* are Galaz and Old Town (see tabulation of data in Creel and Anyon 2003). Great kivas at Mimbres sites to the west commonly have floor grooves, as do most Mogollon great kivas, but no sites in the Mimbres area other than Galaz and Old Town have excavated great kivas with *sipapus* or subfloor burials. Similarly, in the Mimbres valley, macaws have been found only at Galaz and Old Town, even though most of the birds derive from later contexts. The point is that these two communities had ritual features and macaws (especially scarlet macaws) that by and large, based on what we know today, are not present in other Mimbres communities.

Reasonably, I think, we can identify dimensions of mortuary variability that heretofore have not been widely recognized in Mimbres archaeology. That is, during the Late Pithouse period, on very rare occasions, certain individuals may have been treated rather differently upon their death than were the great majority of people. Based on the data we have, the interment of decapitated bodies in great kivas in two of the largest communities suggests that these individuals may have been deliberately killed and decapitated. Interment in great kivas implies that this was a very unusual, very special event. That these events seemingly took place only in the Galaz and Old Town communities, at opposite ends of the Mimbres valley, suggests that these rare events had meaning and significance for other communities in the area. One can only speculate about the reasons for such unusual actions, but again, ethnographic data reveal that the sacrifice and decapitation of individuals occurred only in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe, prolonged drought) when the survival of a community was believed to be at stake (Kabotie 1982:75–76).

However unusual the interments in Room A71 may be, Burial 18 is even more notable. As described previously, an adult male was buried in an unusually large, deep pit, associated with a freestanding wall on a low earthen platform that was itself in physical contact with the floors of two much older and long-retired great kivas. If my interpretation of this complex suite of features and deposits is even close to correct, then this individual was, so far as we know, treated differently than any other individual in the community upon his death. With no small dose of hesitation, I have suggested that the freestanding wall might be considered a marker or monument, but in

the end, the most significant characteristics of this interment may be its prominent public location and physical connection to two ancient community-wide civic-ceremonial buildings. From this, one might infer that this individual had special responsibilities in the community. How these responsibilities may have related to a leadership position and perhaps even social inequality as it is currently studied in the Southwest (see chapters in Mills 2000) is unknown.

I find it difficult to believe that this was a unique occurrence in the Mimbres area, but one cannot forget that many of the major excavations took place in the 1920s, when excavation techniques and documentation were, by our standards, poor. Equally important is the fact that most excavations at Mimbres sites have focused on Classic period architecture because it was thought that most burials were located there. With few exceptions, extramural areas have seen comparatively little investigation, yet when they have (NAN being the prime example), a different suite of mortuary remains have been found. Thus, the apparent uniqueness of Old Town Burial 18 may primarily result from sample bias. Unfortunately, owing to the extensive destruction of Mimbres sites, it is not clear that there are many good places to test this possibility.

Burial 14 is equally intriguing for different reasons. Based on the lack of a recognizable pit, our assessment was that this individual had been interred in the large mass of fill placed over Burial 18 and the three known great kivas as this fill was being deposited. If we are correct in our assessment, the implications are quite different than they would be if this individual had been buried after the mass of fill had been deposited. In any case, one has to wonder at the circumstances of this individual's death and the basis for his interment in this particular location, almost directly over Burial 18.

In sum, our work at Old Town has suggested that the differences in how Mimbres individuals were treated in death was more variable than was known previously. Extrapolating from what has been found at other Mimbres sites, this was expressed primarily in age and gender differences, disposal method (cremation versus inhumation), and place of interment. We also see that the completeness of the skeletal remains, particularly as it may relate to circumstances of death, as well as type of burial facility and associated features, are important variables to consider in analyses of Mimbres mortuary remains. The combination of these factors is surely more

complex than has been heretofore recognized, and we must take into consideration as much variability as possible if we are ever to develop analyses as

revealing as Howell and Kintigh's studies of ancient Zuni society (Howell 1996, 2001; Howell and Kintigh 1996; Kintigh 2000).





## CHAPTER 11

# Summary

During the 1989–2003 seasons, only a very small portion of the Old Town site was excavated, but these excavations were sufficient to reveal several important aspects of the occupational history of this large Mimbres village. We now know that this community was established at least as early as the Early Pithouse Period, generally dated at A.D. 200–550, and continued, in general, for nearly 1,000 years, until about A.D. 1300. The community was evidently a relatively large one for its time and may have had a resident population as large as 200–300 inhabitants during the Mimbres Classic period, A.D. 1000–1130.

As was noted in Chapter 1, Old Town is the only large Mimbres village in the lower Mimbres valley to have undergone systematic excavations; most of the research effort in the area has concentrated on sites at higher elevations farther up in the drainage system. The nearest comparable community with published systematic investigations is the NAN Ranch Ruin investigated by Texas A&M University in the 1970s and 1980s (Shafer 2003). Results of those investigations have been critical to the interpretation of our findings at Old Town.

The chapters in this volume have described the excavations, the architecture, and other features found during our excavations. A subsequent volume will present analyses of artifacts and other remains. A number of important issues have been addressed in some detail in previous chapters of this volume, but some merit additional comment here. Among these issues are pit house courtyard groups, large and small ritual structures or kivas, Classic period architecture, the prehistoric road, and outside influences. In addition, our investigation of the Black Mountain phase remains at Old Town has been important, and we plan to continue our research in that area in the future.

One overarching issue that is perhaps worth mentioning here relates to the potential for relatively

precise dating at Old Town and other Mimbres sites in the lower elevation desert areas. As discussed in Chapter 4, based on our sample, I believe that such sites have good potential for tree-ring dating because good construction timber in the desert grasslands was lacking or sparse in prehistory, particularly wood suitable for building large rooms; consequently, this necessitated obtaining wood elsewhere. Not surprisingly, acquisition of construction wood from distant locations apparently increased over time, as local supplies were depleted and population increased. At Old Town, even taking into consideration our sample bias, the greatest use of imported wood seems to have occurred during the late or Terminal Classic period when many of the rooms were unusually large. Although we can never know with certainty, I suspect that many of the burned Classic period rooms we excavated could have been dated with some precision and confidence were it not for the fact that pothunters extensively broke up the beams.

## **The Late Pithouse Period at Old Town**

In terms of architecture, some of the most interesting and informative results of our investigations relate to pit structures, mostly dating to the Three Circle phase of the Late Pithouse period. Noteworthy among these results are the apparent courtyard group of pit structures in Area B, the small kivas in Areas A and B, and the great kivas, or large communal pit structures, in Area A.

Area B was the only part of Old Town where we found largely undisturbed remains. In this area, we found well-preserved pit structures, several of which yielded tree-ring and/or archaeomagnetic dates. We initially assumed that the small but noticeable mounds in Area B were the remnants of surface architecture,

only to find masonry or coursed-adobe-walled pit structures. Other than having these types of walls, most of the pit structures are typical of the Mimbres area, although it is interesting to note that none of the small pit structures we found elsewhere at Old Town had masonry walls, with the important exception of a Three Circle phase kiva in Area A. The significance of this apparent difference has perhaps not yet been fully recognized.

There are several notable aspects to these Area B buildings beyond the interesting mix of architectural features and construction types. As discussed in Chapter 5, there is first the broad distinction between ritual and domestic structures, a distinction based on the related presence or absence of a ventilator or extended entryway. Only one excavated pit structure, Room B11, had a ventilator and ceiling entry; all others had extended entryways typical of Mimbres domestic pit structures. Among pit structures thus considered to be domestic, however, there was some differentiation by the presence or absence of a hearth as well as by size. The one domestic pit structure that seems to differ from the others in these regards is Room B4, and, owing to its lack of a hearth and the large number of closely spaced interior postholes, we suggest that it may have been largely a storage facility, at least in its final use.

This, of course, brings up the question of household definition, a question addressed numerous times elsewhere in the Southwest. One suspects, given our data, that some households may have had two or more domestic pit structures, one for sleeping and cooking and another for storage. Based on proximity and contemporaneity, if Room B4 was a storage room, it most likely linked to nearby Room B2, but it could also relate to Room B8.

In this regard, it is important to note that our dating evidence, meager though it may be, suggests that Rooms B2, B4, B8, B10, and B11 were at least in part contemporaneous at about A.D. 900. All but Room B10 open onto a common area, and I have referred to this as a courtyard group. There is some excavation evidence, as well as some ground-penetrating-radar data (gathered in June 2005 and not otherwise reported in this volume) suggestive of an earlier courtyard group in Area B. The original Room B4, with its entryway to the south, and Room B10 may have been components of an earlier courtyard group. There are other possible component pit structures as well, possibly including another kiva. Given its importance not only to Mimbres archaeology but to that of the Southwest in general, this possibility is

one of the more exciting future avenues for research at Old Town.

The definition of households opens a number of research issues, and we have taken advantage of one of these by examining ceramic production and acquisition at that level. Three of the pit structures in the Area B courtyard group, Rooms B4, B8, and B11, had floor assemblages of whole or partial vessels, all of which were sampled for instrumental neutron activation analysis (INAA) and included with more than 2,000 other samples from the Mimbres and El Paso areas. Ceramic types present in most of these pit structures were Mimbres Black-on-white, Style II; Three Circle Corrugated; and El Paso Brown, with a few other types as well.

It is interesting to note that the two domestic structures with floor assemblages appear to be rather different, as Room B4 contained only locally made Mimbres pottery, and Room B8 seems to have had only Mimbres pottery imported from the NAN/Swartz area in the middle Mimbres valley. Three unassigned samples from Room B8 render this interpretation provisional, but there is still a notable difference between these two rooms. The kiva, Room B11, in turn yielded both locally made and middle Mimbres valley vessels on its floor and roof. All three rooms had at least one El Paso Brown vessel made in the El Paso area, and the kiva had a Sacaton Red-on-buff scoop from the Hohokam area in Arizona on its roof. The significance of these differences is uncertain, but they clearly reflect intracommunity variability that merits additional research. It will be interesting to compare the INAA data from Area B, particularly Room B11, the kiva, with that from essentially contemporaneous kiva Room A83 in Area A when those data become available (to be reported in the second volume of this report). Similarly, we plan to sample comparable floor assemblages of whole vessels from other sites when we conduct our research on family-level ceramic production and exchange.

As discussed in Chapter 6, we found two pit structures that, in having ventilators and ceiling entries, meet the definition of kiva as set forth by Anyon and LeBlanc (1984) in their report on the Galaz site. As a result of new data from NAN Ranch, Wind Mountain, and ours from Old Town, it has since become clear that kivas were being built in Mimbres sites at least by A.D. 900, a century earlier than what was thought in the 1980s. Indeed, Room B11 at Old Town is perhaps the best-dated kiva in the area.

By and large, small Mimbres kivas are a relatively consistent group in terms of architectural character-



**Table 23. Old Town Pit Structures with Construction and Destruction Dates**

Room	Remodeled	Approximate Construction Date	Destruction Date	Minimum Use Life	Maximum UseLife
B8	minor wall replastering	A.D. 897	A.D. 940–970	43	73
A16	refloored twice	A.D. 874	A.D. 900–925	26	51

istics. During the Three Circle phase, the few so far investigated obviously differed from domestic pit structures in means of entry and presence/absence of a ventilator, and, in the region as a whole, kivas tended to have masonry walls in contrast to the more typical pole-and-adobe walls of domestic pit houses. Why Room B11 had coursed-adobe instead of masonry walls remains a mystery, although, for what it is worth, the large pit structure (B9) over which it lay also had coursed-adobe walls.

Although we do not understand the intrasite differences in method of wall construction, it is quite clear that the Mimbrenos were using both masonry and coursed adobe, as well as the traditional pole and adobe, to build pit structure walls by at least A.D. 900. Coursed-adobe construction, in fact, was in use probably a century or more earlier than A.D. 900 at Old Town, as is evidenced by great kiva Room A71. Moreover, the masonry walls of the pit structures in Area B were comparable in thickness to many of the Classic period surface pueblo walls and were presumably load bearing.

Thus, in this regard, it is interesting to consider the pit house-to-pueblo transition at Old Town. In Chapter 5, I noted that this transition may have been something of a nonevent to Old Town residents because at least some of them built shallow, masonry-walled pit houses long before any surface pueblos were constructed. I suggested that scarcity and relatively high acquisition costs of timber in desert communities like Old Town may have been an important consideration in shifting from pole-and-adobe to masonry construction. If anything, construction of masonry pueblos was easier and less costly for Old Town residents than was pit house construction, given that all pit structures there were dug into bedrock. Of course, social and other economic factors were surely important in the pit house-to-pueblo transition but are not readily addressed with our data.

Our investigation of pit structures at Old Town also yielded data pertinent to an important debate on pit structure use life and its implications for long-term

population trends. In their well-known effort to identify and measure population growth in the Mimbres valley, Blake et al. (1986) used a use-life figure of 75 years for pit houses. This use-life estimate has been challenged by Cameron (1990) as far too long. Our excavations yielded relevant data from two pit structures, one domestic (B8) and one a great kiva (A16); pertinent data are presented in Table 23. In each case, the approximate construction date is based on tree-ring samples, and the destruction date is based on archaeomagnetic dates from burned wall plaster. Assuming that the dating interpretation is basically accurate, the minimum use life for Room B8 would be about 40 years and the maximum about 70. For Room A16, the minimum use life would be about 25 years and the maximum about 50. One hesitates to put too much emphasis on just these two cases, but, in general, they suggest a shorter use life for pit structures that would concur with Cameron's assessment.

The last topic relating to the Late Pithouse period is great kivas, or large communal pit structures. We found three, and possibly a fourth, during our excavations, but only Room A16 was extensively investigated. The basic data on these structures are presented in Chapter 6, and Roger Anyon and I presented a comparative analysis of Mimbres great kivas in our previously cited 2003 article. Here, however, I would like to stress several issues; first and foremost, the fact that such structures are relatively few in number and deserve preservation or highly targeted, very careful excavation.

In hindsight, I would approach excavation of another Mimbres great kiva somewhat differently than was the case with Room A16. If I am correct that the places where great kivas were located held importance beyond the strict use of the building, I would be much more cognizant of context and relationships between what might otherwise seem to be unrelated features and artifacts. We failed to fully appreciate the complexity of the remains in the area of the great kivas at Old Town during fieldwork,



although we did recognize some of it. Would I do things differently today?

Indeed I would, and to the extent possible, I would be more thorough in excavating structures and would embrace the structure life-history approach espoused by Walker (1995, 1996, 2002). For example, in Room A16, a well-preserved great kiva, I would be sure to remove the floor down to the level of bedrock. We chose not to do so in case the site is ever developed for public visitation and Room A16 reconstructed. I very much regret that decision now because the presence or absence of subfloor interments seems so important in differentiating great kivas in certain large Mimbres communities from those in others. Indeed, as noted in Chapter 6 and in Creel and Anyon (2003), subfloor interments, *sipapus*, and floor grooves/vaults are found in Mimbres valley great kivas only at the Galaz and Old Town sites. But our incomplete data set from A16 and the other great kivas at Old Town precludes a more thorough understanding of these features and their significance.

On the positive side, our work revealed, I think, aspects of Mimbres great kivas (and small kivas) that had not been recognized previously or, at least had not been interpreted the same way. It seems apparent now, largely based on Room A16, that the construction fabric of great kivas contains many objects deliberately placed there during construction; I have referred to these as dedicatory objects, although other terms might be preferable to some. It is my feeling that many of the broken shell bracelets, small stone mortars or bowls, palettes, quartz crystals, pigment mortars, and other relatively rare objects were quite deliberately placed in certain parts of the building, some in the roof adobe above the central ritual features, some in the sand at the base of the center posthole, etc. Somewhat different, perhaps, are the barn owl wings placed beneath the southwest corner of Room A16. Are there similar objects beneath other corners or elsewhere, or beneath or in the walls? Frankly, until we completely excavate a well-preserved great kiva and dismantle all remnants of the building, we will not know the extent of such dedicatory objects and cannot fully appreciate their significance.

Although our evidence only hints at what was involved in the great kiva construction ritual, we are perhaps a bit more knowledgeable about the destruction ritual. Our comparative analysis showed that the great majority of Mimbres great kivas burned, often with complete objects on the floor, and Roger Anyon and I feel that the burning was deliberate and

the first step in a formal retirement process that can be recognized archaeologically. Certainly in Room A16, the burned roof fell directly onto the floor, and the walls apparently were then pushed over en masse onto the roof. The result, if not the intent, was to destroy the visible, aboveground portion of the building. In addition, we suspect but cannot be certain that some objects, particularly pottery vessels, may have been placed on the fallen walls. A small corrugated vessel containing wood charcoal lay on a fallen wall in Room A16, and we have even speculated that this might relate in some way to the burning of the structure. Circumstantial evidence suggests that the procedure of burning the structure and then toppling the walls was followed at other Mimbres communities. Presumably, this was followed by the construction of a replacement structure, at least until the Classic period, when construction of great kivas ceased.

Shafer's research has revealed the important presence of mortuary remains, particularly cremations, in the plaza area in front of the great kivas at the NAN Ranch Ruin. We, too, found unusual mortuary features in front of the great kivas at Old Town, and I suspect that the full significance of the relationship between interments and special buildings will not be realized until comparable areas are extensively investigated at other sites.

In our limited excavations of the area of the great kivas at Old Town, no cremations were found. Instead, we found two inhumation burials that appear to have been connected in one way or another with the great kivas. Most notable, perhaps, is Burial 18, an adult male interred in an unusually large, deep grave. This late Classic period interment is believed to have been related to a 5-m-long freestanding wall set on a low earthen platform that was built to have a modest but significant contact with the floors of two underlying and much older great kivas, Rooms A67 and A71. I have argued in Chapter 10 and elsewhere that this was deliberate, not coincidental, and reflects an intent to connect a particular individual in death to ancient but still ritually important buildings.

In contrast, Burial 14, also an adult male, represents a rather different situation. This individual was apparently interred during, not after, the deposition of a large mass of fill over the three known great kivas and nearby features, such as small kiva Room A83 and Burial 18. My assessment of this situation is that the relatively massive deposit represents an effort to cover all remnants of the special buildings and features; in effect, to terminate the use of this

part of the community. If this interpretation is even close to correct, in a sense, deposition of the mass of fill might be conceived of as architectural retirement on a larger scale than that used for individual great kivas. How the interment of the person we refer to as Burial 14 might fit into the retirement or closing process is unknown. Similarly, it is not known if the situation at Old Town is unique or if more or less comparable remains were present at those large sites excavated in the 1920s.

## **The Prehistoric Road**

In our effort to understand the results of the 1993 magnetometer survey, particularly in Area B, we were drawn back to aerial photographs taken of the Old Town area intermittently over several decades. Visible on most of these, especially the earlier ones, was a long, slightly curving linear feature reminiscent of an unpaved road. As it turns out, this feature could not be linked to the magnetometry data, but our interest led to some of the most substantial findings overall, including great kiva Room A16 and all the other remains in that part of the site. In many regards, this feature closely parallels the prehistoric roads identified in the northern Southwest; therefore, we inferred that, it, too, was a prehistoric road. Its significance is twofold, in that it is the first such road found in the Mimbres area, and it led us to important and sometimes related remains that might otherwise have gone undetected.

As described in Chapter 9, the prehistoric road at Old Town is traceable for several hundred meters north from the southernmost point at which it can be seen on aerial photographs, directly east and in front of great kiva Room A16. Over most of its length, the road is recognizable as a 5–7-m-wide strip cleared of rocks and gravel that was deposited along the edges in low, now barely perceptible berms. In places, there are possibly associated rock cairns or other features to the sides. Our investigation of this road was regrettably modest in scope, in part because much of it is located on private property.

Here, too, one has to ask whether this is unique to Old Town. I think the answer is probably not; comparable features likely existed elsewhere in the Mimbres area. At the nearby Pruitt Ranch ruin, for example, there is some evidence for a similar road with an impressive pair of gravel berms bordering it immediately adjacent to the main plaza. In addition, Lekson (1999b) noted the possible road at the Baca

site which, like Old Town and Pruitt Ranch, is in the lower Mimbres River valley. I suspect that such features may still be present at sites located on the lower terraces of the Mimbres River and its tributaries. Most of these lower landforms have a mantle of historical-period sediment that may well have covered the remnants of prehistoric roads, obscuring them on the one hand and preserving them on the other. Thus, the potential presence of prehistoric roads is testable. Countering this possibility, however, is the greater historical-period disturbance of these and higher terraces over much of the area. In any event, because prehistoric roads are known in the Hohokam area as well as the northern Southwest, we should not be surprised if they are present in the Mimbres area as well.

## **The Classic Period at Old Town**

As discussed in Chapter 7, we did essentially no work in the large Classic period pueblo except in the northeastern portion, where the surviving architectural remnants are very late. Indeed, with the possible exception of some underlying floor remnants, all of the rooms we investigated postdate the introduction into the area of non-Mimbres pottery types like Playas, El Paso Polychrome, and Chupadero Black-on-white. Because archaeologists believed in the 1990s that the presence of these pottery types in Mimbres sites postdated what was believed to be a collapse of the social order and abandonment of the area by the Mimbresños, our findings either represented a somewhat different situation or only appeared to be different. My feeling then, and now, is that the situation at Old Town is paralleled at many other sites and not really different at all. To wedge it into the existing nomenclature, I used the term Terminal Classic. At this late stage of analysis, however, I can easily argue that my Terminal Classic is equivalent to what others have simply referred to as late Classic.

Semantics aside, we did manage to extract a good bit of useful information from a very extensively pothunted group of rooms. They are fully described in Chapter 7, and here I want to comment on only a few topics. First, our data and that from other sites indicate that some of the latest Classic period rooms and suites, Terminal Classic in my terminology, were quite large and often had massive masonry walls. At Old Town, interestingly enough, some of these



had true veneers. Based on this and other lines of evidence, it seems clear that this was a time of considerable interaction with groups to the north, east, and south, but the nature of this interaction is not well understood.

Although we had considerable difficulty in obtaining chronometric dates for any of the Terminal Classic period architecture at Old Town, there is substantial evidence for continuing construction and remodeling after the introduction of the late non-Mimbres pottery types. This ceramic introduction could have occurred as early as the first decade of the A.D. 1100s but may well have been somewhat later, perhaps even A.D. 1120, as I have previously suggested. Regardless of actual date, additional construction activity in certain locations suggests a substantial passage of time, implying that Old Town had by no means been abandoned. Basically, in my view, the ceramic changes preceded the distinctive shift from the Classic period masonry pueblos to the Black Mountain phase adobe pueblos and do not suggest abandonment. The question of how long the Classic Mimbres pueblos continued to be occupied cannot be answered with data from our excavations at Old Town, but those data are consistent with occupation well into the mid-A.D. 1100s. Our challenge now is to account for the second half of the A.D. 1100s.

In an article several years ago, I indicated that the scarlet macaw found in the wall at the base of Room A3's door dated to the Classic period (Creel and McKusick 1994). At this point, we are able to be a bit more specific about the dating. As noted in Chapter 7, Room A2 was substantially modified by removal of the upper four floors in the northeast corner and the construction of small Room A3 around this portion. Exactly when this took place is not known, but, in general, Room A2 was part of Terminal Classic Stage 1 construction in the early A.D. 1100s. The presence of this macaw at Old Town, thus, also would date to the A.D. 1100s, probably sometime between approximately A.D. 1120 and 1150.

In addition, a very few skeletal elements of at least one other macaw and possibly a parrot were recovered from disturbed and undisturbed fill immediately adjacent to Room A1's east wall. Although the source of some of these remains cannot be known with any certainty, all were definitely or likely are from late or Terminal Classic extramural deposits, although some could conceivably have come from Room A1. Regardless, they increase to at least two the number of macaws known from Old Town, both from the Terminal Classic room block area and both apparently dating to the A.D. 1100s.

As is well known, the Mimbres area was second only to Chaco Canyon in the number of macaws during the period A.D. 1000–1150 (McKusick 2001:Table 2). These are concentrated in a very few large sites, primarily Galaz, Old Town, and, to a lesser extent, Cameron Creek, although surprisingly, one was found at the small Wind Mountain site (Creel and McKusick 1993). It is perhaps not coincidence that Galaz and Old Town contain most of the macaws, scarlet or military, from Classic Mimbres contexts, paralleling the restricted instances of *sipapus*, floor grooves/vaults, and subfloor interments in great kivas.

Other than the macaws, only one other kind of bird was found deliberately interred in Classic period contexts at Old Town, and that was turkey. Elsewhere, a variety of birds have been found in Mimbres sites as deliberate interments, including golden eagles, hawks, quail, and jays (McKusick 2001:Table 1; Shaffer 1991:160–171). Substantial numbers of disarticulated bird bones have also been recovered from Old Town, many from disturbed contexts (Classic period and earlier), that could derive from interments of the same kinds of birds. These will be described and discussed in Volume 2.

## The Black Mountain Phase at Old Town

As noted in Chapter 9, our work in the Black Mountain phase pueblo in Area C was relatively modest, but it did provide some interesting and hopefully significant information on this poorly known time in Mimbres prehistory. In terms of architecture, we found more stone used in walls than expected for coursed adobe, but the adobe architecture was still quite distinct from the preceding Classic period masonry. The range of room sizes changed little, if any, and hearths were still round or oval. With regard to ceramics, there was little to distinguish the Black Mountain phase from the Classic period beyond the cessation of Mimbres Black-on-white production. Obliterated corrugated vessels continued to be made, although generally with a more micaceous and more reddish paste. Otherwise, the array of ceramics—El Paso Polychrome, Chupadero Black-on-white, and Playas Red—found in the later contexts in the Terminal Classic pueblo dominate the assemblage. There was also continuity in use of the Hinton arrow point style, and obsidian remained the preferred source of lithic material, especially the Antelope Wells subsurface of Mule Creek obsidian.



Similarly, in terms of mortuary behavior, we found only intramural inhumations and no cremations during our modest excavations. The only undisturbed interment had a plain smudged bowl with a kill hole in the bottom.

Thus, other than the fact that a new adobe pueblo was built a short distance from the Classic period pueblo and Mimbres Black-on-white ceramics were no longer made, not much changed in the material culture that we encountered. As best as can be determined, much the same situation prevails at other large sites in the Mimbres area, at least below about 6,000 feet in elevation. That is, the Classic period room blocks were abandoned, although not necessarily the community itself. Whether the new adobe room block was built immediately thereafter or decades later is not known; we simply did not acquire data to determine this one way or the other.

There has been much division of thought on the notion of Classic period collapse and abandonment versus continuity, and I have generally stood on the side of continuity. Even if I am right about architectural changes and dating late in the Classic period, however, no data of which I am aware necessarily precludes a brief abandonment of these communities during the second half of the A.D. 1100s. Where all the Mimbresños would have gone during what was generally a long dry period is unknown, as is why. The “fallow valley” explanation given by Nelson and Anyon (1996) is attractive but lacks much empirical support for this particular time period, largely because no destination locality has yet been identified for the emigrating Mimbresños. But if there was a general abandonment of the Mimbres area, the evidence suggests that it was largely the Mimbresños or their descendants who returned and built the Black Mountain phase pueblos, not a separate ethnic group. At present, little more can be said about this issue other than we need more

investigation of Black Mountain phase sites, and the sooner the better.

## **Concluding Statement**

Regrettable though it may be, the extent of pothunting at Old Town is not unusual for Mimbres sites, but—like those of the Mimbres Foundation and Texas A&M University’s at NAN Ranch—our excavations have shown that there is still important information in these sites. By no means, however, should this be understood as condoning the pothunting, for its rather deleterious effects were a daily obstacle for our research. Fortunately, we have managed to tease much useful information not only from the site itself but also, to some extent, from pothunter collections and the limited documentation they have yielded.

The data presented in this volume reflect the positive results of our many seasons of excavation and research. Several journal articles, theses and dissertations, and presentations at professional meetings (Society for American Archaeology, Mogollon Conference, Pecos Conference, Chacmoool Conference, Arizona Archaeological and Historical Society, and Texas Archeological Society) have also brought the findings to the attention of the professional community and the public. Resulting publications are listed within the References Cited section. All these efforts testify to the abundant data and scientific value remaining at this highly disturbed Mimbres village. In Chapter 1, I noted what I consider to be the major contributions of the Old Town Project; and here in Chapter 11, I have explored some of these issues more fully. Clearly, much remains to be investigated at Old Town, and some parts are better preserved than others, but all retain a measure of potential. One can only hope that this volume adequately conveys the extent of this potential and at least a portion of the history of the ancient Mimbresño residents of Old Town.



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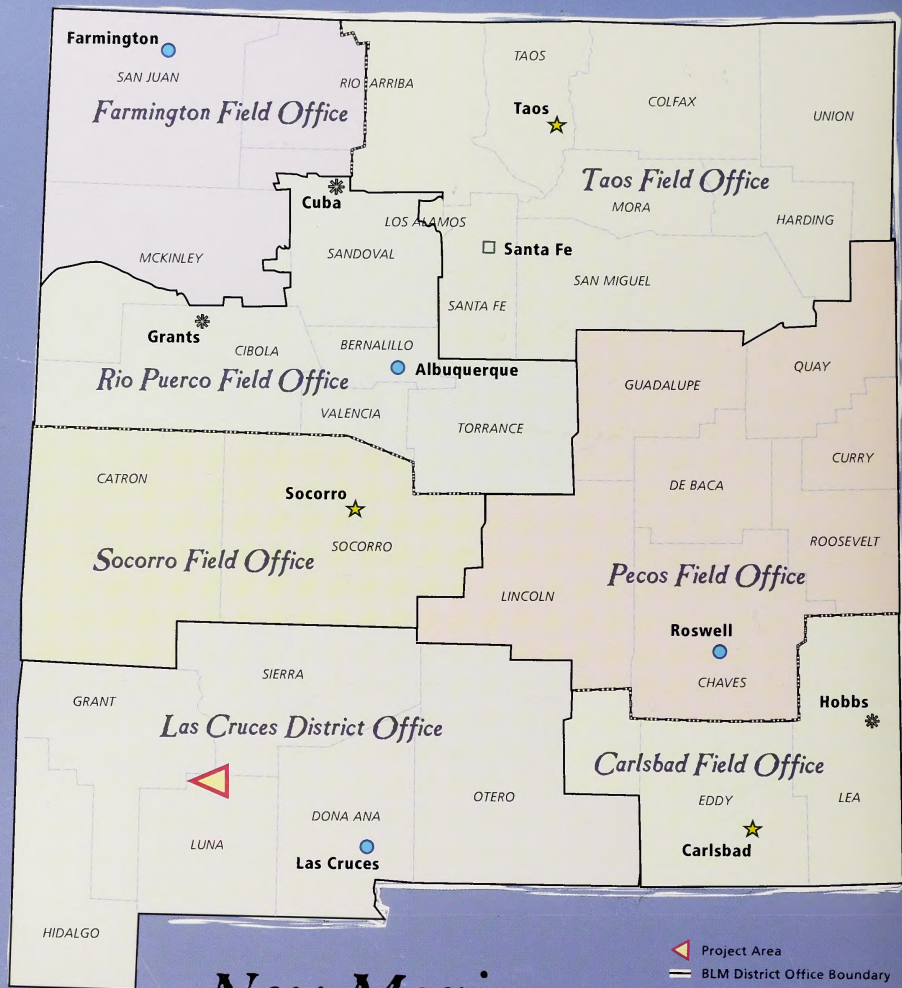
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# New Mexico

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

-  Project Area
-  BLM District Office Boundary
-  BLM Field Office Boundary
-  County Boundary
-  BLM State Office
-  BLM District Office
-  BLM Field Office
-  BLM Field Office